The Memoirs of a Baby

By Josephine Daskam

[See page 28

"'PERHAPS YOU WANT ME TO THROW MY BABY DOWN THE STAIRS?'"

THE MEMOIRS OF A BABY

BY JOSEPHINE DASKAM
(MRS. SELDEN BACON)

ILLUSTRATED
BY
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TO

E. G. J.

STERN GODMOTHER OF A FRIVOLOUS INFANT,
HIS BIOGRAPHY IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

J. D. B.

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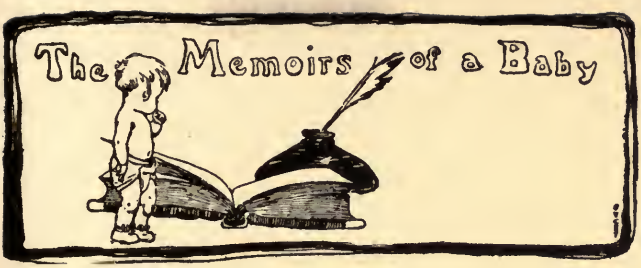


I

WHICH DEALS WITH THE YOUNG MOTHER

IT seemed to poor Susy that Aunt Emma had never loomed so majestic before her, that her deep voice had never pealed so irrevocably through the house.

"Of course, of course," she answered, "I—I know it's a crisis, Aunt Emma. I—of course!"

"And while I wouldn't for the world alarm you, my dear—for any alarm in the present state of things might easily be fatal—at the same time I feel that somebody ought to prepare you for the fact that this — this responsibility may not be so simple, may, in short, be more complicated and greater than you might expect. That is to say—"

"Do you mean twins?" Susy inquired placidly.

Aunt Emma blushed.

"You take one up so abruptly, Susy! I don't know that I should have put it in just that way. I hope I have tact enough not to deliberately inflict a shock that might in the present state of things—"

"As far as that goes, Aunt Emma, the present state of things doesn't necessarily imply that I am utterly imbecile, you know, and anyway, it wouldn't be a shock. I think twins would be interesting. It would be such fun not to tell them apart!"

"Susy!"

"Well, it would. And I'd dress them in Russian blouses, with those shiny patent-leather belts around their little tummies, and shiny round patent-leather hats, and bang their hair straight across, and if I ever guessed right—which was which, you know—I'd punish them!"

Aunt Emma's face expressed that degree of resignation which imperfectly masks a righteous desire to shake the object of it out of that object's shoes.

"You change so little, Susy," she complained. "Marriage seems to have had no effect whatever. . . . I remember so well a conversation we had the first day I met you. It was so characteristic. I had been telling you some of Tom's good traits, and then I mentioned the things that would, in my

opinion, be certain to make him a good husband. And then you replied that it was very strange, but that I had not included one of *your* list of essential qualities. I asked what they were, and you made me a reply I shall never forget, it was so extraordinary.

"'Before I was engaged,' you said, 'I made up my mind that the man I married must satisfy me in five points. First, he must never tip his hat back on his head; second, he must know how to speak to a waiter; third, he must know how to order a dinner; fourth, he must not be too good-looking; and fifth, he must have a full head of hair! And you see that Tom answers all these requirements, which is certainly very strange, and seems to show that we were made for each other!'"

Susy smiled reminiscently.

"What a memory you have, Aunt Emma!" she murmured. "But there is nothing extraordinary about the five points. You know yourself how disgusting a man looks with his hat tipped back, on a warm day. In the elevated train, for instance. And not to do it shows a certain amount of self-control. It's really a test of character. And the way he speaks to a waiter gives a man away hopelessly. He mustn't bully and he mustn't cringe, you know. But the waiter must respect him. And I certainly wouldn't

want to be known as the wife of that handsome Mr. Wilbour—heavens! About the hair—" Susy paused reflectively. "I suppose everybody is allowed a few preferences she can't account for, Aunt Emma, and that happens to be one of mine. I *do* like a man with a full head of hair!"

Aunt Emma shook her head helplessly. Susy's character—though she sometimes felt it the wildest hyperbole to refer to it in that way—had consistently baffled her comprehension from the day of their acquaintance.

But no one who knew Aunt Emma could imagine for a moment that a comparative and temporary failure could induce her to abandon any legitimate effort. Even as she sighed she took a claret-colored volume from the library table and removed her paste-board marker.

"Shall we have a little reading, my dear?" she inquired.

Susy wriggled deeper into the pillows of the divan.

"I am all ready, Aunt Emma."

"I forgot to tell you that we are not going on with the Parkman, Susy. I was discussing this matter with Harriet Strenway, and she suggested that it might be a little too stimulating in the present state of things. All the battles, of course. . . . I reminded her that the examples of

heroism and endurance, personal bravery, etc., had recommended themselves to both of us, and then, too, his being an American made it so especially fitting. But as she says very truly, that was earlier in the day. Something more soothing, she thinks, would be better now. With particular attention to the style—she herself read Ruskin almost exclusively before Henry was born."

"Did she, really?" Susy jumped to a sitting posture among the cushions. "Oh, Aunt Emma, how you have relieved my mind! So that was it!"

"Please don't throw about so, Susy; you will certainly hurt yourself unless you remember to use a little more control. What do you mean?"

"Poor Harry Strenway! I always knew something was the matter with him; you know he used to propose to me regularly, Aunt Emma. None of the girls could say exactly what it was, but there was something—I don't know—he never seemed to do, quite. It must have been Ruskin. Thank heaven, you never read any to me!"

"Don't be absurd, Susy. Henry Strenway is an excellent fellow; I never could see why you and your friends made such fun of him. And of course his little—er—eccentricities are not to be attributed to Harriet's reading Ruskin beforehand. It could make no such difference."

"Couldn't it, though?" Susy argued persistently. "Then if it didn't make a difference, why are you so particular about what you read to me, Aunt Emma?"

"'POOR HARRY! IT MUST HAVE BEEN RUSKIN'"

Aunt Emma maintained a discreet silence. It is very difficult to preserve the attitude of a self-respecting benefactress towards a person who has no real interest in being benefited. As Susy openly expressed a preference for any reading-matter illustrated by Mr. Christy, irrespective of the text

—a statement that turned Aunt Emma cold with horror—it was manifestly necessary to direct her mind into channels more distinctly formative. Hence the morning readings, the result of much consideration on the part of the reader, and the occasion of more or less politely concealed toleration as far as the audience was concerned.

"I am going back to the Pater, my dear, unless you will change your mind about the Greek myths, which would really be the best—"

"No, I won't. I simply can't endure them. We had to learn them all at school, Aunt Emma, and I never had any memory, and I was always getting perfectly dreadful marks. If you could only spell them reasonably—but you can't. I could never spell Psyche if I lived to be a thousand. It used to be Friday afternoons—ugh! They're so childish, Aunt Emma!"

"That is because you don't read them deeply enough, Susy. They are—" Aunt Emma took up a magazine, and turning rapidly to an evidently familiar page, read in the didactic tone instinctively devoted to editorials:

"'—in their restrained and majestic symbolism the most spiritual and at the same time the most satisfyingly concrete vehicle (always excepting our own great Christian allegories) for conveying those lessons of fortitude, patience,

high purity, and endless aspiration so necessary, so inevitable to that happy expectancy of her who—'"

"Aunt Emma! You are not *talking*, are you? Because I've lost track— Oh, it's that magazine!"

Aunt Emma resigned herself to the inevitable paroxysms of laughter that seized both Susy and her husband at any quotation from the magazine in question. It was called *The Young Mother*, and as Susy obstinately refused to subscribe for it, on the ground that it would bring her bad luck, Aunt Emma took the responsibility upon herself, and tore off the wrapper at the breakfast-table once a month, stoical under the running fire of satiric criticism that a comparison of her very evident middle-aged singleness and the touching title of the magazine so obviously invited.

From this mine of suggestion she would produce the most amazing rules and regulations for the guidance of her nephew's wife, notably the system of improving reading, and the scarcely less odious discipline of classical concerts.

Susy would cheerfully dance fifteen miles an evening to Sousa two-steps, and had been known to weep at Tosti ballads as sung by a favorite barytone, but she attended an afternoon devoted

to Beethoven with the expression of a lamb led to the slaughter.

Her husband, who vibrated between a desire to kiss her for her sweet adaptability to a temperament so exigent as Aunt Emma's, and a yearning to slap that good but sometimes mistaken woman for her insistence in the matter of her theories and those of *The Young Mother*, usually compromised by laughing at them both, to the amazed forbearance of his aunt, who could never understand why she had allowed him to laugh at her since she first put him into short trousers, and the amused indifference of his wife, who had been laughed at and adored by every man of her acquaintance, and had never dreamed of resenting it.

Having waited for the present burst of laughter to subside, Aunt Emma continued calmly:

"'—of her who, brooding over—'"

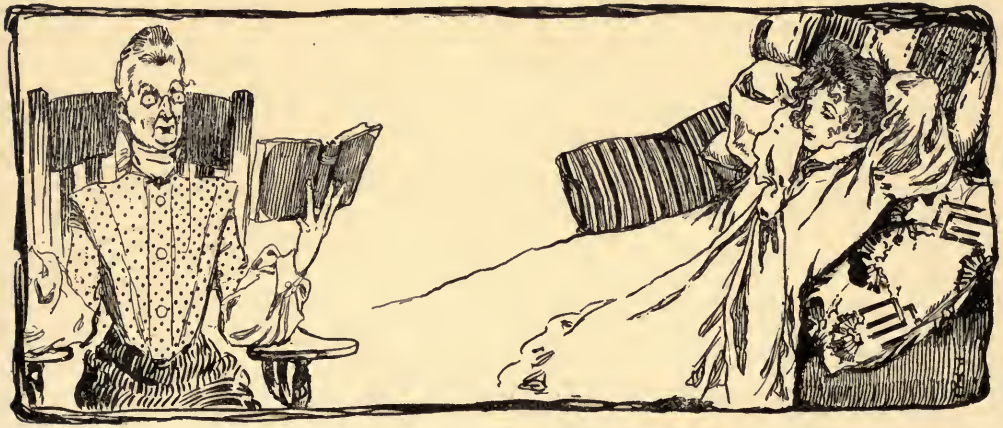
"I think brooding is the most disgusting word, Aunt Emma, absolutely the most disgusting! It always reminds me of one of two things—either a sulky person or a hen. I'm not either one, and that article will never make me listen to their old Greek myths. So it's no use, Aunt Emma. If you're going to read that dreadful Marius book, I don't mind so much, because I don't understand anything whatever in it, and parts of it are awfully

pretty. But I do understand the Ruskin, and it irritates me terribly — preachy old thing! No wonder poor Harry—"

"I'll begin directly," Aunt Emma interposed hastily, and Marius the Epicurean moved æsthetically on his way for an hour.

Susy lay quietly among the pillows, dozing from time to time, staring vaguely into the fire, pulling her toes in and out of her slippers. Sometimes a little dreamy smile slipped over her face, sometimes a chance word of the text called up an instant sadness, sometimes a quick dread darkened her eyes and clinched her hands. But Aunt Emma, oblivious to all else, was lost in Marius, and Marius, as far as his audience was concerned, was lost in his style — that very style which had so recommended him to Mrs. Strenway.

Exactly one hour from the moment the pasteboard marker had left the claret-colored book it was returned to it, considerably in advance of its last resting-place, and Aunt Emma retired for her own nap, leaving her niece and *The Young Mother* in undisputed possession, with unlimited opportunity for cultivating each other's acquaintance. This opportunity young Mrs. Wilbour improved no further than to make an unmistakable face at the instructive periodical, employing the time



"MARIUS THE EPICUREAN MOVED ÆSTHETICALLY ON HIS WAY FOR AN HOUR"

until her husband's arrival in practising new styles of hair-dressing.

Later, Aunt Emma heard their shouts of laughter across the hall, and wondered for the thousandth time if they would ever grow up. Nor would she have been encouraged had the cause of their mirth been made clear to her.

"Tommy dearest—I wish there was a magazine called *The Young Father!*"

"Heavens! I don't."

"Well, but, Tommy, if there happened to be, and you had to be read to out of it, and it was all about Greek things and thinking beautiful thoughts and studying architecture, and nothing interesting, what would you do?"

"I'd seek out the editor, Toots, and shoot him."

"I think what I mind the most," Susy continued, tying her husband's head bandagewise in a pale green Ascot and flapping the ends like rabbit's ears in his enduring face, "is that in all these articles they keep talking about the thoughts that come to you while you are sewing. Of course I can't have the thoughts, because I can't sew. Tommy dearest, do you *mind* my not sewing?"

"My precious Toots!"

"Well, I thought perhaps you might. Aunt Emma thinks I ought to learn, because there was some poetry in that old *Young Mother* about the

"'IF YOU CRY I'LL SHOOT THE EDITOR'"

young hopes that were embroidered into little petticoats, and things like that, you know. It really was awfully pretty, the poem. And it made me feel sad, because I couldn't learn so soon, Tommy darling. You know Sis always did it for me, and since we were married, Aunt Emma. And—and the clothes wouldn't look nice, and I want his things to be so nice—"

"My precious baby, if you cry I'll shoot the editor anyhow! It will be the death of us all, that infernal *Young Mother*. Toots, you will break my heart!"

"I have to cry a little, because I wanted to all day. Ever since Valeria Bell played that violin this morning, I have been so sad, Tommy. Aunt Emma read how Leonardo da Vinci's mother used to be played to on the violin before he was born, and that's why he was such a great man, probably, and so she asked Valeria to come in every day and play a little, and she came to-day and played 'My Old Kentucky Home,' and the chorus always made me cry when the quartet sang it—do you remember, when we were engaged?—and she played the alto, too, and I felt as if I was going to die or something—"

"Toots, shut up!"

"And so I cried, and then Valeria cried, and Aunt Emma rushed around, and the puppy howl-

"'AND I FELT AS IF I WAS GOING TO DIE'"

ed, and so finally I had to laugh. I hope Valeria won't come again, Tommy."

"Not on her life, she won't!"

"And then I've been making up my mind. We mustn't call him *he*, Tommy, because he's practically certain to be she. There was a table of them—which they were, I mean—and all the first ones were girls. Practically all, I mean. Aunt Emma says it's bad for me to have my mind made up wrong. Of course it *might* just be a boy, but when we thought of all we knew they were all girls. Minnie's baby, and Ethel's, and your own sister's, Tom—"

"Oh, nonsense!"

"No, it isn't, dearest. As Aunt Emma said: 'Look at Tom. Was he a first baby?' and I had to say no, because there is your sister Julia."

"Where did you find the fool tables?"

"Why, in *The Young Mother*, dear—"

"Oh, confound *The Young Mother!*"

The subscriber to that abused periodical was at that moment adding to her diary the latest encounter with the incomprehensible character of her niece:

"S. informed me this morning with an actual smile that she had 'finally done it, and now it was off her mind.'

"'Done what?' said I.

"'Fallen down flat, right on my nose,' she replied, with an air of great amusement, to which my horror seemed only to add. 'Everybody has to do it once, you know, Aunt Emma, and I tell you I did it thoroughly — my whole length, on Fifty-seventh Street. Thank heaven, it's over.' Is there any subject S. would not treat flippantly? And to think that to her is to be confided the destiny of a human soul!"

It was her nephew in person who explained to Miss Wilbour the extent of his indifference to the achievements of Leonardo da Vinci, with regard to the effect of violin music previous to his distinguished birth.

"And as for sewing, Aunt Emma, I don't give a continental hang whether Toots ever sees a needle or not. You know very well she never did sew; why should she begin now, with all her other responsibilities?"

"Responsibilities, Tom! I should think so, indeed! And approached in the most extraordinary spirit. When I remember your cousin Minnie and the way she divided her time—so much for reading, and so much for lectures at the hospital, and always twice a week to afternoon service, and made every stitch of the baby's clothes herself, and—"

"Oh, Minnie always was a precious little

prig, Aunt Emma. You know that perfectly well."

"I know that she makes an admirable home for William Sears, Tom."

"And William Sears tried hard for Toots before he gave her a chance to make it, too! Don't you forget that, Aunt Emma! Now don't you bother about Tootie; Valeria Bell has made her blue as indigo with that infernal violin. I'm going to bring in some people and cheer her up. We'll have some coon songs and something to eat and—"

"I'm sure Valeria plays very well, Tom."

"She plays altogether too well for this family, Aunt Em, and that's the trouble! Now you tell Norah to bend her mind in the direction of the cheese, and find out whether there is going to be enough, will you? I'd like to be able to make one rabbit before I die without sprinting five blocks for the materials. And suggest that corn-meal muffins, while good in their place, are not my first choice when it comes to a rabbit."

"Yes, Tom, I'll attend to it." Aunt Emma had lived through many useful years under the firm conviction that she had brought up her nephew Thomas with an unsparing severity and what she called "a taut rein"; that she was in reality his unquestioning slave had long been apparent to the

meanest intellect of their acquaintance, the more intimate part of which laughed consumedly at her efforts to surround his wife with the atmosphere most precisely in accord with her spiritual and æsthetic requirements.

Susy in her long fur cloak and an expression of settled melancholy, gently but firmly escorted to the Ninth Symphony; Susy seated resignedly on a red-plush bench gazing at placid landscapes by Homer Martin, which she insisted looked so much like the country that she might as well be going home for Thanksgiving and be done with it; Susy directing ill-concealed frowns at the unconscious subjects of the Parthenon Frieze, while Aunt Emma led the way through the Metropolitan collection of casts, and escaping finally through the inspired suggestion that the atmosphere of damp, if immortal, plaster was quite as likely to produce a chill as an elevation of soul—had been the subject of sympathetic mirth for many months. She was a light-hearted little creature, and for the most part joined in the laughter she caused, but occasionally even her good-tempered tolerance deserted her, and she would flee to her married sister, who possessed more babies than theories, and who cheered her with new shirt-waist patterns and popular novels.

It was on her return from one of these visits

"ESCORTED TO THE NINTH SYMPHONY"

that she confronted the greatest of many small crises for which the too-suggestive *Young Mother* was responsible. It is doubtful if any of the performers in the drama will forget it, though only one of them can be persuaded to relate it.

Aunt Emma had improved the occasion of Tom's departure to his wife's old home to make certain long-planned preparations for Susy's approaching birthday. Both the young people noticed a certain self-congratulation in her welcome, both felt some small surprise in store; but it was upon Susy alone that the revelation burst; it was Susy's shrill cry that brought her terrified husband to her side.

Buried in his arms, she screamed frantically: "Take him away! Take him away! Oh, Tom, take them both away! I shall die—I know I shall! I shall never sleep in this room alone again—never! Oh, *please* take him away!"

Staring in angry expectation around the dimly lighted room, there appeared to the startled gaze of Mr. Wilbour a menacing white figure almost the size of life, cold and demure, gazing with placid, empty eyes at his trembling little wife.

Through the half-gloom one white arm extended threateningly; the costume of their guest consisted of a mass of drapery depending from his arm.

"What in thunder— Where— Lie still, Susy

darling; he—it can't possibly hurt you, my sweetheart—"

"It's only the Apollo Belvedere, Susy!" Aunt Emma's voice expressed a certain terrified disgust. "What is the matter with you? It's just a statue! I had it put up to-day. It's for your birthday—it's nothing but a plaster cast. Please stop screaming, Susy!"

"In heaven's name, Aunt Emma, what is the meaning of this?" Tom demanded furiously. "Have you lost your mind?"

"Not at all, Tom. Put her head lower. There, there, I'll stand in front of him. You can't see him now."

"I can, too! I see his arm! Oh! oh! oh!"

"It was because I read so much about the Greek women, Tom, in—in *The Young Mother*, and I know no reason for Susy to act this way. All around their houses these statues stood, it said, and they took especial pains to look at them all the time. And the Roman women, too, for that matter. It had a real influence on their children."

"I should think it might have had," her nephew remarked bitterly. "Shut your eyes, Toots, or look away—look over there."

"Oh, Tom, don't, don't! there's the other one! He's worse! Don't tell me to look at him!"

Mr. Wilbour whirled about and met the intelligent if strenuous expression of the Flying Mercury. To the enraged host this jumping, beckoning visitor presented an appearance no less imbecile than exasperating.

"It is from Harriet Strenway," Aunt Emma explained dejectedly, "we got them together. Who would have supposed Susy would act this way? The man brought them up so carefully—only one gouge in the hall paper, from the helmet. I thought in the morning when she first woke up she could look at them—"

"You see, this time I said, 'I will behave, I will be brave—it isn't real!'" Susy gurgled through chattering teeth; both hands grasped her husband's. "When I wake up in the night, and I think it is some one in the room, and I am so frightened, I just say, 'It's nothing, it's nothing, it *can't* be anything,' and then it isn't anything. But this is just like the time I heard the trampling, and I stuck it out, and I wouldn't believe it, and then it *was* the man painting the roof!"

"Yes, dearest, never mind! Come out with me."

"And—and this time I just said: 'No, no, I won't scream; I won't! It's a night-gown hung up; it's—it's something—' Then one of them moved and I saw him! And it was real; it wasn't

"'FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, LET TOOTS ALONE!'"

any use pretending. It was so dark—he was so big— Oh! oh! oh!"

"Let go, darling, and I'll take 'em right away —you sha'n't see them a moment more—"

"No, no, Tom, stay here! Tom, I shall scream!"

"There, there, Toots; lie down and shut your eyes."

Mr. Wilbour advanced and seized the Apollo Belvedere about the waist. It was much heavier than he had expected, and he collapsed gently to the floor, the statue in undisturbed dignity reclining upon him.

Aunt Emma gasped, and Susy giggled hysterically.

Tom set his jaw and rose to a determined height, scowling at the Apollo, who made no further resistance. A heavy thud and the subsequent closing of a door in the hall implied that the bathroom closet had enshrined the chief jewel of the Vatican.

Later he attacked the Mercury, the women following his every motion with a strained attention. As he staggered through the door, the astonishing profile view of an apparently struggling victim, one arm extending in agonized appeal behind his captor's back, one white knee crooked for winged flight, turned the tide of Susy's emotion, and peals

of laughter echoed wildly through the bedroom. Tom paused a moment in relief, the slippery figure twisted in his arms, and the fluttering helmet crashed against the door.

A shower of plaster pattered to the floor; a wail

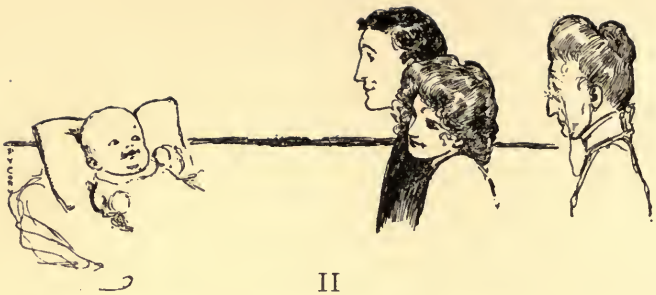
"THE CURLS OF THE DIVINE MESSENGER CRUMBLED IN HER BLACK BROADCLOTH LAP"

from Aunt Emma cut across a hollow crash, and Mercury lay prone and headless before them.

Mr. Wilbour arose and faced his family. "Susy," he commanded, "go into my room!" Shaking with laughter, mopping her eyes, Susy trailed out of the room, and Tom addressed his aunt. "Aunt Emma," he thundered, "this is just about as much as I can stand! If it's Toots who's going to have this baby, for heaven's sake let her have it! If not—"

He stalked out of the room, straddling the fallen Mercury contemptuously.

Once he glanced back. Aunt Emma sat in the doorway, dazed and tragic, a very Judith, with the curls of the divine messenger crumbled in her black broadcloth lap.



II

WHICH DEALS WITH THE BABY

"BUT what am I to do, Aunt Emma? Stick pins into the poor child?"

"Susy!"

"Perhaps you want me to throw my baby down the stairs?"

"Susy, I beg you—"

"Or I might—"

"Susy, it is positively unnatural for you to talk so! How, even in jest, you can say such terrible things, I cannot see. Your cousin Minnie was so different. She used to say that the very thought that she was the mother of her baby threw her into an inexpressible state of feeling: actually, I have seen Minnie's eyes fill with tears when she spoke of it!"

"Um, yes," Susy returned, with a noticeable lack of enthusiasm. "I seem to remember seeing Minnie's eyes do that quite frequently, Aunt Emma—don't you?"

"Minnie Sears is a fine girl, Susy, and I never could understand the attitude you and Tom take towards her. No child was ever better brought up than little Dorothy. I only hope—"

"If you're going to hope that my baby will be brought up like Dorothy Sears, Aunt Emma, you might as well stop right here, for it never will happen. And as for Minnie's eyes when she thought she was Dot's mother—why, who else *could* be her mother, when it comes to that?"

Aunt Emma sighed with her most accustomed air.

"You are so absurdly literal, my dear. But then, you always were. Now for instance, in the matter we were discussing, of course you understand perfectly what the book means—"

A peculiar expression stole over Susy's face; one could not have decided immediately whether she were more amused or mutinous.

"What is it, Susy?"

"I was thinking of Tom, Aunt Emma, and what he said when you got the book."

"And what was that?" Aunt Emma inquired resignedly.

"He said"—Susy giggled reminiscently—"he said—" A growing laugh choked her.

"Yes, dear?"

"He said, 'Thank God, Toots, that blamed *Young Mother* has gone to its rest!'"

Aunt Emma assumed an expression of great self-control.

"I don't think Tom ever appreciated the practical—"

"Oh yes, he did, Aunt Emma. He *did* indeed. It was the practical side that bothered him. He said he didn't care a hang what the fool dry-goods clerk that edited it thought—you know Tom always insisted that a young man wrote the things, Aunt Emma, just like the answers-to-questions and the about-the-house columns—but he did mind a lot when you paid attention to it and we had to do the things. He appreciated it."

Miss Wilbour passed over this statement in discreet silence, and adjusting her glasses, read with a suggestive emphasis the following sentences from a neat volume held at a competent angle.

"*We will first, then, consider the cry of an infant.*"

Susy bit her lip significantly, but forbore to interrupt.

"*Let the mother not hush his cries by walking or rocking him; this is a very bad habit.*"

Susy opened her mouth very wide, but shut it suddenly with an audible snap, which caused Aunt Emma to look up curiously; still she preserved a respectful silence, though evidently with difficulty.

"*Instead of quieting, on the contrary it should be a mother's duty to insist that her baby indulges in a certain amount of good, healthy crying each day.*"

"But if he doesn't? If he won't? Aunt Emma, you can't believe—"

"You should make him."

Aunt Emma's tones rang with the finality of doom. Susy shuddered.

"But, Aunt Emma, Tom says it's such a perfectly grand thing that he doesn't cry! Tom says that shows—"

"May I ask what possible method Tom has of discovering what that shows? His opinion on that subject, Susy, is about as valuable as—as—"

Miss Wilbour struggled for a comparison sufficiently contemptible, failed to achieve it, and ended feebly with, "as anything at all!

"I brought Tom Wilbour up, my dear, and while there are many men far worse than he in many ways—"

Susy sniffed angrily and shrugged her shoulders.

"—In every way, for that matter," Aunt Emma pursued evenly, "at the same time he is very irresponsible in a great many regards. And as to his judgment about the baby—"

She took an invisible pinch of nothing between her thumb and finger and flipped it dramatically from her.

"'MAY I ASK WHAT POSSIBLE METHOD TOM HAS OF DISCOVERING WHAT THAT SHOWS?'"

"There's one thing about his judgment, Aunt Emma—you remember he said it would be a boy, don't you?"

"My dear child, he could not possibly—"

"I notice it *was* a boy, though, Aunt Emma!"

There were times when Aunt Emma could have shaken her niece with a good will.

To both of them occurred a sudden flash of reminiscence: a stilled, shaken household, a hurrying nurse, a terrified man tramping the library with regular, dogged footsteps, a thin, unknown cry, and later, a brisk congratulation:

"All right, Mr. Wilbour—fine boy—right as a trivet—step in and see her a moment!"

And then to Miss Wilbour's startled ears there had come a faint though cheery call:

"Mr. Martin Brinkerhoff Wilbour, Aunt Emma, and he's pleased to meet you. You see, the tables aren't always right!"

With a dazed wonder how in a moment like that Susy could have remembered such a childish triumph, and a pained recollection of how Minnie Sears had on an analogous occasion murmured a rapt quotation to her husband, Aunt Emma had grasped the handle of the door and answered weakly and at random. Her nephew in moments devoted to teasing her insisted that her reply had conveyed the idea that not to have provided an

infant with sex in accord with the tables of the *Young Mother* was to have failed signally to profit by its teaching; but this she indignantly denied, though sincerely ignorant of what she had really said.

On his adding that his pity for William Sears had increased tenfold after what she had told him, and that a girl who in a situation of that sort was capable of getting back at a man with Browning could readily be spared from the home-circle of Thomas Wilbour, she had washed her hands of his spiritual development for the hundredth time, and procured from Mrs. Sears the neat volume which even now held his wife's attention.

The title of this comprehensive if somewhat didactic book was to become as dread a factor in the family as its more frequently recurring but not more insistent predecessor.

The Baby, His Care and Training, dogged the down-sittings and the up-risings of the latest Wilbour with an inevitable persistence. And this pursuit was the more trying for the reason that in almost no respect did the infant in question even so much as faintly emulate the characteristics of the inspired subject of the treatise.

For instance, he did not, would not, and apparently could not, cry. In direct opposition to custom, tradition, and the rules of the game as stated

in the book, he preserved an unbroken cheerfulness.

This attitude on his part was not only irritating but distinctly alarming, because, as his father ingenuously explained, it was impossible, owing to the undeveloped state of his intelligence, to point out to him the unconventional, not to say unjustifiable, course he had adopted from the start.

"Tell him Aunt Emma says he will grow up without any lung tissue," he would urge. "Tell him he ought to *give several good screams and get red in the face!* Tell him I say so!"

At which Susy would gravely impart this information to Martin Brinkerhoff Wilbour, who would smile placidly and continue to endanger his lung tissue.

If slapped suddenly on the back he would draw a deep breath, utter a short, disturbed ejaculation, and then smile on the originator of the assault with such well-bred forgiveness, such an air of, "I know you didn't mean to do it," as to plunge that remorseful person into gulfs of self-accusation. Certain furtive and sinister attempts on Aunt Emma's part to shake his abnormal calm and surprise him into a lapse from his dangerous *recueillement* met only with a good-humored tolerance, followed by a long, wondering look of such pained incredulity when the object of her

brutal pokes and tantalizing withdrawals of his bottle became all too clear to him, as to cause her to dissolve in tears by his crib.

So worried did the good lady become, after months of this impenetrable peace, that she would have welcomed eagerly even *the cry of temper and indulgence*, "Which he simply couldn't have, with Tom and me for parents, Aunt Emma"; or *the cry of hunger*, "Which he can't pretend to have, as he always has enough to eat"; or *the cry of pain*, "Which he hasn't the slightest excuse for having, as nothing sticks into him or wrinkles him, and Dr. Blanchard says that babies needn't ever have colic!"

But it became at last evident that in Master Wilbour's social scheme these lower-class and doubtful expressions of emotion were relegated to precisely the same plane as the highly recommended wailings of the book disrespectfully referred to by his father as the "league rules."

"And some of 'em are simply beastly," Tom would add. "Look at this, now:

"*Do not omit or defer giving the baby his food at the regular hour because he happens to be asleep.*

"I like that—by George! I like that!

"*Wake him; it will not do the slightest harm—*

"Oh yes, wake him! 'Excuse me, but here's a bottle you don't want, my dear child! Hop up

and pour it in! In the course of nature you are taking a little needed rest, but what of that? With the nurse and the family out of the way, and nobody to take off everything you've got on every ten minutes and put on something else, you thought you'd snatch a little nap and repair some of the nervous waste of the day, but it's all over now. Open your mouth.'

"How would you like it, Aunt Emma?"

"That's quite different, Tom."

"Not at all. Not a bit different. Get down on the lounge some day, throw that purple afghan over you and snooze nicely off. Everything all right, cares that infest the day all folded their tents like the what-d'-you-call-'ems and silently sneaked away, and just as you're 'way down under, somebody grabs you and shakes you up.

"'Hi, there, wake up—here's a sandwich!'

"'What's the matter? House on fire?'

"'No, but eat this sandwich and hush your noise!'

"I don't know what you'd feel constrained to remark, Aunt Emma, but I have a general idea of my own soft answers."

"You don't understand what you're talking about, Tom. Hand me the book."

Aunt Emma turned with a practised hand to the paragraph in question and continued:

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"*—the slightest harm, and he will soon fall into the habit of waking when that time comes.*

"That's the idea, Tom, to have him form a regular habit—"

"Yes, indeed, I'll bet he would. And you, too, you'd form a regular habit of nervous prostration. You'd sleep like St. Vitus's dance. Pretty expectations you'd drop off with—a pleasant nap to look forward to! Personally, I'd form a regular habit of keeping a revolver under my pillow!"

At remarks in this strain, if carried on in his presence, the heir of all the Wilbours would frequently laugh unrestrainedly, to the puzzled awe of his father, the delight of his mother, and the disapproval of his great-aunt.

For this tendency to levity had persisted from his birth, and appeared to be no less deeply seated in him than deplored by the manual devoted to his up-bringing.

Again and again had Aunt Emma dolefully read to his parents the ultimatum of the "league rules":

"*The new-born infant needs absolutely no amusement whatever!*"

It may be that Martin Brinkerhoff Wilbour needed no amusement, but the fact remains that he got it. Life in all its phases possessed for him unsounded depths of entertainment, and in

the intervals of uncontrolled laughter at the acts and words of his astonished elders he gave way to frequent subtle smiles resulting from subjectively humorous experiences unguessed by the world at large.

"It isn't as if," Aunt Emma would argue, one eye on the fateful volume, "*rocking had been introduced by way of change, patting, dancing up and down, walking, talking, rattles, noisy, squeaking toys* —he's never been over-stimulated by those things! It can't be that your sister began it, Susy, by persisting in dancing him in the beginning?"

"Good heavens! Aunt Emma, how can you think so? As if that could make a particle of difference! That's enough to make the baby laugh!"

And indeed a gentle smile wrinkled the cheeks of Martin Brinkerhoff. It spread to his eyes, and then, as he caught Miss Wilbour's troubled and piercing gaze, a low chuckle burst from the misguided child, which grew rapidly into a roar of ill-timed crowing.

Aunt Emma shut *The Baby, His Care and Training*, with an undisguised slam.

"That boy is possessed," she declared forcibly, while Tom and Susy drowned their offspring's laughter in their own.

It was reserved for Tom, whose contempt for *The Baby, His Care and Training*, grew daily, to

make in this connection the most startling application of all the theories so persistently refuted by his son. It became his custom to seize the offending volume directly after dinner, and holding it above Aunt Emma's scandalized grasp, to read selected phrases from it, accompanied by a rapid fire of satiric comment, during which it is more than probable that Martin Brinkerhoff was grinning diabolically in his crib up-stairs.

This habit dated from the evening of the day signalized by his son's too violent mirth, when Tom, in idly turning the pages of Aunt Emma's *vade-mecum*, had hit upon a sentence of inexhaustible amusement to him and Susy.

"*A Child*," he announced triumphantly, "*is much happier with one simple object of amusement!* There you are. I've discovered something in this book at last. Of course he is. That's what's the matter with him, Aunt Emma, and now what are you going to do about it? It's up to you!"

"What do you mean, Tom?"

They laughed delightedly at her perplexity.

"Can't you see?" Susy urged mischievously. "Can't you?"

"I'm sure I never gave him much, my dear—only that red ball and the dog picture. He hates that rubber cow—you said so yourself."

"'A CHILD IS MUCH HAPPIER WITH ONE SIMPLE OBJECT OF AMUSEMENT!'"

"But what does he laugh at the most, Aunt Emma? Don't say you haven't noticed!"

Miss Wilbour frowned thoughtfully. "Why, really, Susy, I've never noticed that any toys amuse him very much. The cat frightened him, if anything. As a matter of fact, he seems to take more interest in people. You know how often he laughs at me—"

"That's it, Aunt Em, that's it!" Tom slapped the book and roared again. "*You're* the person that's disorganizing my son's nervous system—*you're* his one simple object of amusement!"

"Oh, Tom, how can you be so ridiculous? Of course it doesn't mean—"

"Woman, don't seek to get out of it by these paltry excuses! Give me your attention a moment.

"*By this time the little brain is so overworked that the poor baby is in a highly nervous state. Poor baby, has he no rights?*"

"Tom, how can you?"

"*It is only when the adult steps in and urges him on that he goes beyond his powers*, Aunt Emma! Dear me! dear me!"

"Tom, give me that book!"

"*It is the pleasures that come but seldom in one's life that are most enjoyed and appreciated*—mark that, Aunt Emma—*the ones that occur every day*,

or with clocklike regularity, soon pall upon one and cease to be pleasures!"

"Tom Wilbour, if you really think that I have a bad influence on that child—"

"My dear Aunt Emma, I think you are a delicious old goose!"

"Why, the idea, Aunt Emma! Stop it this moment! He was only teasing you! The baby loves you dearly, and I don't know what we'd do without you! Please stop, Aunt Emma!"

Their distress was so genuine, so close lay their affection under their quick laughter, that she kissed them both forgivingly and thanked heaven, for them, that some one of constant purpose was given them to balance their united irresponsibility.

This position, indeed, did not lack support from the Wilbours' friends, who, while in one breath they marvelled at the easy tolerance with which Susy endured the attempted regulation of her baby's life at Aunt Emma's hands, and the readiness with which she yielded in most details to the results of that lady's conscientious researches, were yet forced to agree in the recognition of the older woman's unstinted devotion to the little family, and more than that, to respect her practical assistance in many of the crises that confronted the young people. It was well, indeed,

that Martin Brinkerhoff's temperament was no more exigent, and that his peculiar sense of humor adjusted itself so readily to that of his mother, for Susy insisted that she could never have put up with anything less in the way of a son.

"Of course," she confided to Aunt Emma one day, "I wouldn't let the baby go hungry—I'd rather myself; and if one of us had to be awfully cold and wet, I suppose it would be me. But, oh dear, Aunt Emma, I shouldn't enjoy it—not a bit! And I'd give him a piece of my mind afterwards!"

"My dear Susy, you know that is not what you really think. Everybody knows that a mother never hesitates a second—that death is nothing to her—"

"Everybody's an idiot, then. I suppose you're thinking of that silly calendar Minnie sent me. Of all things, a calendar named 'The Mother Heart'! If she thinks I flop it over every week she's much mistaken, and I'm going to tell her so."

It was precisely the calendar in question that Miss Wilbour had in mind, more particularly a long and not too cheerful ballad included in it, dealing with the heroism of a young mother who perished in an incredible snow-storm with notable alacrity, having previously wrapped her

blue-eyed infant in all but the most conventionally requisite of her garments.

"As for that girl in the snow," Susy pursued comfortably, "I hope you realize, Aunt Emma, that I would never, never do it."

"Oh yes, you would, Susy; you couldn't help it."

"Couldn't I, though! And what would poor Tommy be doing, may I ask? You don't seem to think of that, Aunt Emma. In the first place, he would never allow it to happen—any of it—and in the second place, do you suppose he would want the baby without me? You must admit, Aunt Emma, that Tommy needs me more than he needs the baby."

"Why, Susy, the question is how you would feel, not Tom."

"Very well, then, I feel the same as Tommy—I need him more than I need the baby! I could have other babies, but I could only have one husband in the world, Aunt Emma Wilbour, and if you think for a moment that I don't love him ten times the best—"

Aunt Emma looked with amazement at Susy's flashing eyes and excited cheeks; she glanced involutarily at the snow-storm lady on the calendar, and drew a long breath. Then she answered in a low voice, with an unusual simplicity, a new

respect for something unknown to her experience:

"Very well, my dear child, it may be so. I—I never felt that way for a—for any person."

It may have been this recent humility that enabled her to overlook with unusual indulgence Susy's refusal, one Sunday, to superintend the baby's morning bath.

"Mary can do it perfectly well, Aunt Emma, and I have to get ready to go out with Tommy. Why don't you give it to him yourself, if you think she doesn't do it right?"

An unwonted stillness in the nursery, which usually on these occasions resounded to the splashing of her son and the cooings and admonitions of his nurse, drew Susy to the door a little later, and at sight of her motionless figure in an attitude of strained attention, Mr. Wilbour stole softly up to peep over her shoulder.

On a low chair beside the rubber bath-tub, a heavy blanket over her knees, an alert though quiet infant balanced on her palms, sat Aunt Emma. Across the tub, in an oratorical attitude, stood Mary West, the nurse, one eye nervously fastened on her official charge, the other turned at unwilling intervals on a small book held gingerly in a disapproving left hand. In a perfectly expressionless monotone which ill concealed her

"AN ALERT THOUGH QUIET INFANT BALANCED ON HER PALMS"

distrust of the present proceedings, she read somewhat jerkily, as follows, to the undisguised excitement of the audience in the doorway:

"*Extend — the — three — middle — fingers — down — the — back — with — thumb — and — lit-*

tle — finger — stretched — from — shoulder — to — shoulder — this — will — form — a — support — for — the — entire — body — let — the — head — rest —on—your wrist—(be careful, please, Miss Wilbour, he's going to kick out in a minute, please,) *—and—grasp—the — feet — with — your — right—hand—and—lift — the — baby — into*—(you're losing him, ma'am,) *— the — tub — in — a — sitting position*— There, Miss Wilbour, I told you!"

With a dizzy lurch, though still serenely smiling, Martin Brinkerhoff Wilbour slipped, accompanied by a hollow splash, to the bottom of the tub. There was a snort of disdain from Mary, a cry of horror from Aunt Emma, a wild rush from the door. Susy snatched him from his nurse's rescuing arms and pressed him, dazed and dripping, to her immaculate shirt-waist.

A moment of suspense, and then as he sat slippery and shining like a Cupid under a fountain, blinking the water from his eyes and sucking it adorably from his under lip, the master of the situation gasped once or twice, coughed chokily, and meeting his father's anxious eye, winked gravely once. Then observing Aunt Emma, a huddled and humiliated figure, an irrepressible grin fluttered his chin, widened, broke, and dissolved in an estatic bubble of laughter.

Susy, pressing her lips to his soft, wet little

body, hugged him and laughed too; Mary, at sight of *The Baby, His Care and Training*, ignominiously afloat in the tub, chuckled contentedly; and Tom, unable to speak clearly for his mirth, struggled in vain for articulate words.

Presently he found speech, and taking his son gently from Susy's arms, he laid him, kicking and crowing, in Miss Wilbour's dejected lap.

"Practise on him all you like, Aunt Emma," he commanded magnanimously, "he's game!"

III

WHICH DEALS WITH THE DAWNING SOUL

MISS WILBOUR regarded the material in her lap with unconcealed satisfaction. It resembled a laundry bag without a drawing-string, except that in place of a single long slit in one side it boasted two short holes in the bottom. In texture it was denim, in color an uncompromising blue.

"I think," she mused placidly, "I will make two while I am about it, and then while one is being washed—"

"Don't you think you'd better wait, Aunt Emma, till we see whether he likes it?"

"Why, nonsense, Susy, of course not! Why shouldn't he like it? And the question is, too, what you like, it seems to me. Do you want that batiste—even the plain one, to say nothing of the one with French knots—all worn through in half an hour?"

"No, indeed, Aunt Emma, after all the pains you took with it! But perhaps he won't creep long enough to wear out two of them, and it could be washed very quickly, you know."

"It's very unusual for you to be so economical, Susy," Miss Wilbour suggested—"very. I believe you think he's not going to creep at all. Do you suppose he will walk up and down stairs immediately? Dorothy Sears crept for six months—up and down, all over the house. Everywhere you went—"

"You stumbled over her. I should say so, Aunt Emma. And perfectly disgusting, I think. Tom says he used to walk on eggs, really, every minute he was in that house, for fear he'd step on her. She would come out of the queerest places and frighten you to death. Once I fell upstairs over her and tore my silk slip—that pale green one—and I could have cried. It was right in the front breadth, too. And Minnie acted as if it was my fault. Tom said they ought to have fastened a head-light to her and made her ring a gong."

"I always admired Minnie Sears's attitude towards her baby, Susy—in the way she gave up the house to her. She used to say that she felt nothing that was too nice for her to dare let Dorothy go near it had any right to interfere with her

progress; and as for considering her in the way—she couldn't understand, she told me once, how

"'MRS. UPSON SPILLED HER TEA ON DOT'S HEAD'"

any true mother could ever consider her child in the way, no matter what the circumstances."

"I know. But plenty of other true mothers considered Dotty in the way when she crept around and chewed their best gowns, afternoons," Susy returned obstinately. "I never shall forget, Aunt Emma, if I live to be a hundred and four, that time when Mrs. Upson spilled her tea on Dot's head. It was one of Minnie's Tuesdays in Lent, and Mrs. Upson refused to apologize, because she said if babies crawled up from the bowels of the earth under your skirts, they deserved to be spilled on, and Minnie thought she ought not to go to early service, feeling as she did—"

"Feeling as Minnie did?"

"No, Mrs. Upson, of course! Catch Minnie thinking anything was the matter with *her* feelings!"

Aunt Emma coughed discreetly. "About the creeping, though, Susy: it would be too bad if he didn't. If only you could have heard Miss Utleigh this morning on just that subject! She certainly has great command of language."

"About those blue denim things, was it?"

"No, indeed, it was much broader. Exceedingly broad, in fact: *The Creeping Child—a Symbol*—was on the syllabi—"

"'Bus, dear aunt, you mean *'bus*," a sepulchral voice remonstrated.

Aunt Emma jumped. "Oh, Tom! When did you come in? Of course I mean *'bus*. But I always say syllab's—most of the ladies do, in fact. It seems to sound better, somehow."

"And how was the fair Aurora? Dewy as ever? Is the Soul still Dawning?"

"It was a beautiful talk," said Miss Wilbour severely, "and we learned a great many things. For that matter, so did Miss Utleigh herself, in the discussion. She says that often as she has given this course, she never fails to learn some new thing in the discussion, in different places."

"I'll bet she does. She learns how to cash your checks, for one thing."

"Now, Tom! She said she was sincerely grateful to us."

"That's where she was right—she ought to be. If I could pull in a hundred for handing out such patter once a week for a month, I'd be grateful. Aurora's all right."

Miss Wilbour had never been able to impress her nephew with the necessity for regarding with sufficient seriousness the latest lamp to her feet—an instructive and fashionable lady disrespectfully referred to by him as Miss Utterly Utter, or more commonly, Aurora. Both these names were, to borrow the lady's phraseology, in the nature of a symbol, the latter in particular being directed

at the general heading of her course of lectures—"The Dawning Soul."

Kindergarten talks to young mothers having long ceased to be a novelty among the leisured class of women who formed her clientèle, this gifted person had conceived the brilliant idea of a series of talks relative to what might be called the pre-kindergarten stage of existence. From that point of view the cubes and triangles of Froebel appeared as complicated as the differential calculus, and the spiritual significance of colored tissue-paper was referred to the mature consideration of a comparatively advanced infancy.

It was to a study of the delicately vague conceptions of members of society usually considered too youthful for analysis that Miss Utleigh directed her hearers' attention, and it was the third of the series that had inspired Aunt Emma to the construction of the denim creeping-bag.

"Because, Tom, it is perfectly true that these simple things that every baby does, mean a great deal more to the child than they do to us—signify more."

"Meaning which?" her nephew inquired laconically.

"Why, for instance, just lifting up their arms. Of course when we do that it doesn't mean anything in particular—"

"If you'd ever been held up in Chicago, you'd think it did," Mr. Wilbour commented, "but go on, Aunt Emma."

"As it may be we're just yawning, or something like that. Now to a child that can't use its mind yet—in the sense that we do, at least—all bodily actions are equivalent to mental states," Aunt Emma pursued glibly, to the astonished admiration of her audience, who sat lost in sincere amazement at the scientific atmosphere in which they suddenly found themselves.

"'*So the lifting of the arms in a young infant, when perfectly voluntary,*'" Miss Wilbour continued, at this point unblushingly consulting her note-book, "'*is as definite an aspiration, from his stand-point, as the unuttered prayer of an—a—an Appleby, or the—*'"

"Unuttered prayer of a what?" Tom demanded curiously.

"A—an Appleby, I think," Aunt Emma repeated, uncertainly, but with a slightly defiant emphasis.

"What in the world is that, Aunt Emma?"

"Yes, what is an appleby? Tell us," urged her nephew with interest.

"Why, to tell the truth, Tom, I don't know exactly. I can't seem to recall just what it *does* refer to," Aunt Emma replied uneasily, "but

it's not important, anyway, that part. '*The reaching out of the tiny hand, that grandest symbol of our human—*'"

"But what is an appleby, Aunt Emma? I feel I must know. I can't think of anything else."

"She must mean apple-tree," Susy suggested helpfully.

"Ah, perhaps she does, my dear. Probably— No, it's all one word. I think it's a person. But I can't remember— Oh, it's Agassiz! I remember now, because I thought of that big stone in Boston. Of course! How stupid of me! Agassiz."

"I breathe again," Mr. Wilbour declared, with apparent relief. "I had begun to fear that Aurora had lost her way. But she's all right. If I get her point, she means that every time Binks sneezes he's giving his views on the tariff—symbolically?"

His aunt ignored this remark. "And so on up to games," she added luminously. "All the games mean something, even the most childish—something deep and—"

"There is where Aurora scores again," Tom interrupted. "All the games do. We had a little game last night that meant a good deal to Henry Upson. He— I say, Aunt Emma, what's that blue bag for?"

"It's for the baby to creep in, Tom. It's the best possible thing for him—creeping, I mean. It's so perfectly natural—it's one of the stages of—"

"It 'll be his last appearance on this or any stage if he creeps much in that," commented the baby's father decidedly. "He'll smother. What's he got to do it in a bag for, anyway? How will he see where he's going? Are those eyeholes?"

Mr. Wilbour handled the bag distrustfully; his wife giggled.

"Those are for his arms, Tom, of course."

"His arms? His arms?"

"It ties up around his neck — here are the strings, you see."

Mr. Wilbour shook his head silently and scratched a match. "Good heavens!" he murmured, after an interval of self-communion—"good heavens!"

To Master Wilbour the bag appeared as one more of the extraordinary series of entertainments provided by his thoughtful family for his relaxation. He chuckled wisely when his mother explained its uses to him in the confidential manner she invariably adopted, and thrust an inquiring finger through the much-discussed armholes. Then he shook his head decidedly.

"You don't care for it, then?" she inquired

solicitously. "I thought you wouldn't. But you must put it on to please Aunt Emma. You needn't wear it long."

"You see, Binks, unless you hitch along over the rugs you'll never qualify," his father added seriously; "never in the world. You must consider that psychologically speaking your reeling and writhing and stretching in coils represent the aspirations of your Dawning Soul. Personally speaking, I should say it was much as ever you had a soul. I didn't suppose they got 'em so early. But if you have one, and if your present actions anything like represent it, I hope for your sake it hasn't dawned yet, because really. . . "

Martin Brinkerhoff was lying on his stomach on the rug, with his heels in the air. His hands were clasped firmly at the back of his head, which he was endeavoring to drive into the floor, to the imminent danger of his nose. Though nearly purple in the face from his exertions, he bravely disregarded the almost certain extinction of his most prominent feature, and though occasional involuntary little yelps of pain indicated that his present ambition was not unattended by suffering, he ceased not from his mysterious efforts.

"Far from aspiration, my dear girl, if anything ever indicated a passion for grovelling in the mire—"

"Tommy!"

"I speak symbolically, of course, Toots. Do you happen to remember a description of any such performance?"

"No, I don't," Mrs. Wilbour owned, truthfully. "I remember reaching out the arms was *growth and aspiration* — there was something out of Browning under that — and clinching the fists was *struggle with the lower powers*, and throwing back the head was *defiance of cramping conditions*—"

"Now, my dear girl, you may just tell Aurora from me that there she is far, far from the truth. If she thinks you can defy cramps by throwing back your head—"

"Nonsense, Tommy! You know very well. But there's nothing whatever about burrowing your nose into the floor—nothing."

"I'm glad there's not. I should hate to know what it symbolized. He's probably doomed. For heaven's sake, Binks, spare that rug! You'll go through the planking. As a good imitation of an Artesian well you would draw a neat salary on any vaudeville stage, but as a Dawning Soul you leave too much to the imagination."

They rolled their son over on his back and kissed each other irrelevantly, while he derided them with open laughter. Aunt Emma discov-

ered them inserting his wriggling person into the bag, and was forced to witness the undignified

"SUSY SHOOK HER RESENTFUL SON OUT OF THE BAG"

spectacle of her grandnephew with his plump and protesting legs thrust through the neatly

bound holes, and the source of his indignant remonstrance momentarily concealed!

"Tom, you will certainly injure him — he's smothering!"

"Not a bit, Aunt Emma, he's aspiring; see his arms! Heavens! that child is all soul—all! I wish Aurora could see him!"

Convulsed with laughter, Susy shook her resentful son out of the bag, and Aunt Emma stayed all reproofs in the interest of superintending the decorous adjustment of the blue denim anomaly. Presently he sat upon her lap, the string pulled taut about his neck, looking like a bewildered little merboy with an unfinished tail.

"Oh, Tommy, we ought to have his picture—we really ought! If we only had Will Sears's camera! Isn't he too dear and funny for anything?"

"That's certainly William Sears's best point —his camera," Mr. Wilbour agreed thoughtfully. "I wish we had it. Well, now, ring up. Binks, creep away! Where are you planning to creep first? Would you like a stroll in the Park? I say, let's start him up-stairs—then if he falls, he'll fall into the bag! How's that?"

Aunt Emma affected not to hear this suggestion, but rose carefully, the blue denim parcel in

her arms, and deposited it in the middle of the floor. "Now, Martin, come over here to Aunt Emma—come!" she said invitingly.

Martin regarded her with a certain interest, but made no attempt to move.

"Come, dear! Come to Aunt Emma!" she repeated.

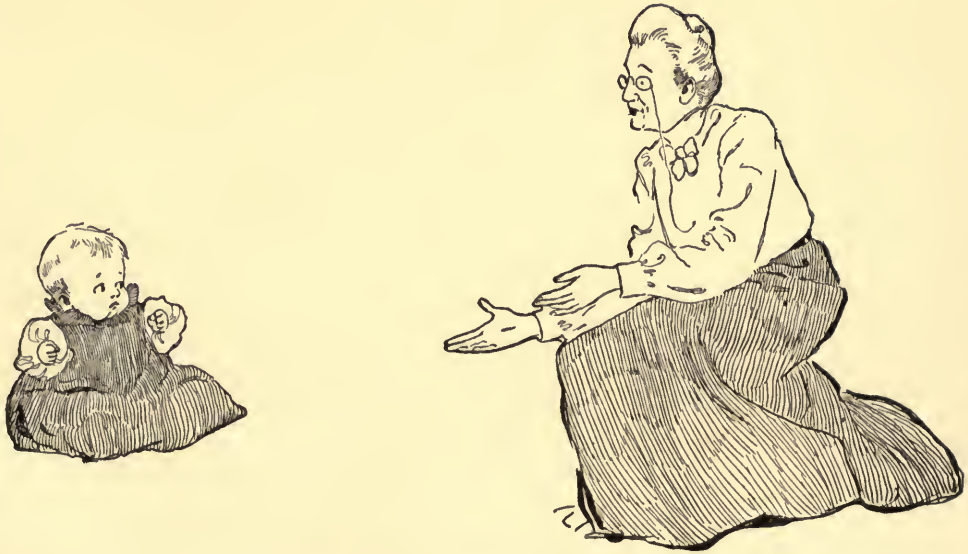
He looked at her with distinct reproach. "How can I come, tied up like this?" his eyes inquired.

"Come along—there's plenty of room in the bag: you can move in it," she urged.

Martin's face indicated forcibly that Aunt Emma's unstinted appreciation of the bag caused him to regret extremely his obvious and humiliating inability to bestow it upon her.

"Put it on, if there's so much room in it, and enjoy it yourself," he seemed to suggest.

Then as his mother smiled seductively at him and his father rattled a never-failing watch-chain, firm determination replaced a growing distrust in his expressive countenance, and swaying a little as he lay, to gather the requisite momentum, he began to revolve suddenly in their direction. The uncanny spectacle of an animated blue bundle whirling more or less uncertainly towards them held all three speechless for a moment; then Aunt Emma rushed upon the object and shook it reprovingly.



"'COME, DEAR! COME TO AUNT EMMA!'"

"Martin Wilbour, I am ashamed of you!" she declared. "Did anybody ever see such an obstinate child? Won't you do anything you're expected to? Don't you intend to creep at all? He can't roll this way, can he, Tom? He'll get —he'll get—"

"Apoplexy at the least, I should say," his father assured her promptly. "What should you think this symbolized, Aunt Em? If this is the way his soul dawns, what will it be at noon? Did Aurora post you on this pinwheel game?"

"No, Tom," answered Miss Wilbour in all simplicity, "and I can't think what it could possibly represent!"

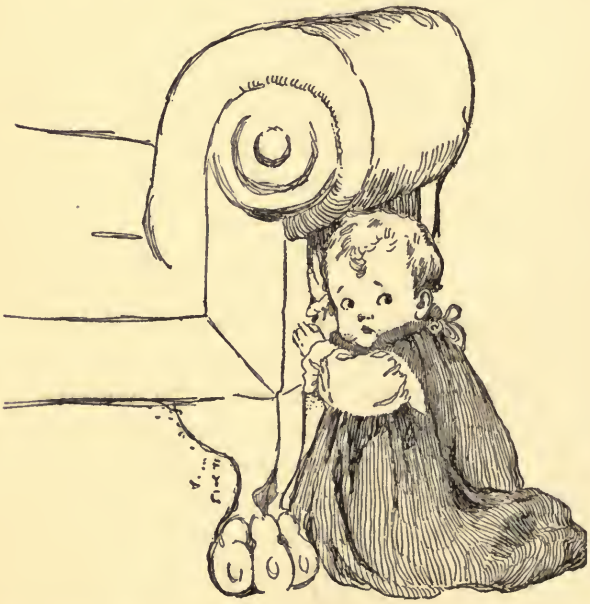
"Probably that he will gather no moss," Tom suggested gravely, "if there's anything in that idea."

Miss Wilbour looked vague. "I suppose so," she assented politely, to the intense satisfaction of her young relatives, who hugged each other furtively behind the davenport.

"Really, though, the best we've had has been this Creeping Child one, Tom. You see, there are so many comparisons. Man in the Dark Ages, and then the cave-dwellers, and then the soul, generally. Before it realizes, you know. Just groping and stumbling along, and then suddenly it stands upright and—and—"

"And there you are," Tom concluded charitably. "Yes, indeed, Aunt Emma. Five dollars for the course, I understand? It's cheap at the price. But observe my son!"

For Master Wilbour, realizing that unless he



"HE THEN RAISED HIMSELF WITH A CERTAIN DIFFICULTY"

resorted to summary measures he would probably, like the famous lady in Mr. Lear's box, pass all

his life in that bag, was carrying out a truly Napoleonic scheme.

Rolling with wonderful precision to the corner of the davenport, he began a process of backing and filling which lasted till he had established himself at the desired angle to that piece of furniture. He then raised himself with a certain difficulty to his knees, from which position he stared solemnly at them for a moment, as if hoping to soften their hearts and win, if possible, without playing his great card. But they were adamant. No one lifted a hand to rid him of that hated blue bag. With a sigh he put up his pudgy arms, and catching at the heavy carving on the leg of the davenport, essayed to rise. He had not calculated the distance with sufficient accuracy, however, and fell back with a thud.

But he was not his great-aunt's nephew for nothing, and a second attempt saw him balancing unsteadily in his bag, undignified, it may be, but erect at least.

Now he unclasped the fingers of one hand from the carving, now the other, and stood before them absolutely unsupported. They held their breath, as at the crucial moment of a trapeze performance. What would he do next?

With infinite care he advanced one leg, and then, more rapidly, the other. For one sublime

and tottering moment he stood proudly before them, stranded between them and the davenport, a confessed pedestrian, while they gaped in de-

"AND STOOD BEFORE THEM ABSOLUTELY UNSUPPORTED"

lighted wonder; and then with a mighty stride he collapsed into the bag, whose folds enveloped him completely.

Mr. Wilbour lifted him from the floor and

handed him dramatically to Aunt Emma. "Take that fool thing off, Aunt Emma," he commanded. "It's an insult to any child, capable of doing ground-and-lofty tumbling while tied up in a bag, to expect him to waste his time creeping. He'd much better be at dancing-school. Why, good heavens! I couldn't do that myself!"

Aunt Emma untied the strings meekly, and her grandnephew emerged triumphant.

"It wasn't that I wanted to force him to creep, Tom," she explained, "but I thought that, besides being good for him, it might amuse him. Miss Utleigh says—"

"Amuse him! It was likely to! Why, Aunt Emma, would it amuse you to go through life sewed up in a bolster-case? But the things that are expected to amuse a child—"

"That's just it," Susy interrupted, with feeling. "What do you suppose that dreadful old Mrs. Fuller advised me to do? She said that she used to sit her grandson on the floor and smear his hands with molasses, and then drop little puffs of down on one hand—little soft feathers, you know. They'd stick to one hand, and he'd pull them off, and then they'd stick to the hand he pulled them off with, you see, and so on. She said he'd play with perfect content that way for hours at a time."

"Which asylum is he in now?" her husband inquired with interest.

"Wasn't it dreadful, Tommy? That poor, helpless little child!"

"I suppose she reasoned that in the course of nature she'd be dead before he got big enough to kill her," Mr. Wilbour remarked philosophically. "But you can't always tell about that sort of thing. He might have been strong for his age."

"I had to tell Dorothy that we couldn't let him have a kitten this morning," Susy went on, still looking proudly at her son, who resting on his recent laurels, was lying placidly on the rug.

"Miss Utleigh says that nothing understands young life like young life itself," Aunt Emma suggested. "She gave her sister's little girl a spaniel puppy when she was a year old. They grew up together. Martin just loves that woolly dog now, and a kitten is different from a cat. It would teach him gentleness, Susy, and a respect for life in all its—er—manifestations," she quoted, somewhat apologetically.

"Well," Susy agreed, "if you think so, Aunt Emma, and one of us was always in the room with him. Dorothy left the kitten to stop for on her way from kindergarten. You might bring it up, Tom."

"'OR ELSE HIS SOUL HASN'T DAWNED QUITE SO FAR AS YOU THOUGHT'"

Tom, who consistently regarded his son as a professional entertainment, and derived an impersonal joy from every experiment of which the long-suffering infant was made the object, ran lightly down the stairs and returned immediately with a dejected gray kitten, held by the neck. "You're sure it won't suck his breath, or anything like that?" he inquired.

"Not while I'm here," said Aunt Emma. "Now, Martin, smooth the kitty—it won't hurt you! Pat it."

She took his fat little hand and stroked the gray fur with it.

At the soft contact a flash lit in his eye; an expression of determination spread over his face; he laid both hands on the kitten firmly.

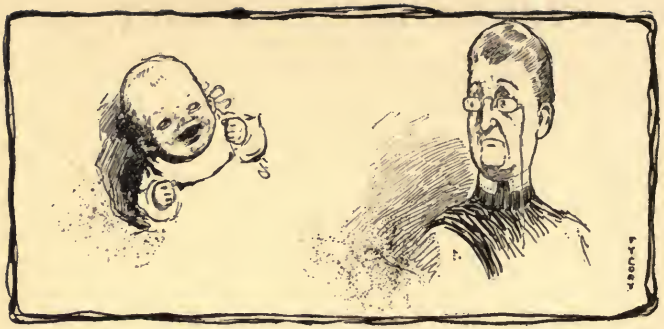
"There, see how he loves it," Aunt Emma cried, but even as the words left her lips, an anguished wail from the cat and a happy howl from Martin Brinkerhoff directed their attention to his occupation, which consisted of twisting the kitten's neck with one hand and pulling out a handful of fur from its stomach with the other.

As his father separated him with difficulty from his victim, and the color returned to Susy's cheeks, Aunt Emma swallowed hard a moment and spoke.

"I think perhaps Miss Utleigh's niece was—

was different," she said ("Don't throw the poor kitten down so hard, Tom"), "or else—"

"Or else his soul hasn't dawned quite so far as you thought," muttered Mr. Wilbour grimly, nursing a long red scratch on his thumb, "I told you!"



IV

WHICH DEALS WITH ONE LITTLE LIFE

WHETHER Aunt Emma's experience with Miss Utleigh had broken her trust for a while in all professional educators of extreme youth, or whether the prospect of a longer visit from home than she usually permitted herself occupied her attention during the next month, was unknown to her small family; but the fact remained that with the last of Aurora's lectures a noticeable absence of successor to that lady's mantle compelled remark.

It is not to be supposed in this connection that any obvious occasion for comment was allowed to pass unobserved by young Mr. Wilbour, who, to use his aunt's phrase, had never appeared to be at all afraid of the sound of his own voice; and

that gentleman might have been seen one morning hanging solicitously, if somewhat *en négligé*, over the side of his son's geometrical brass crib, apostrophizing him in the following mournful vein:

"Gone to the dogs! Alas, poor Binks! Given up, thrust out on his cold parents, not worth the paper he's printed on, so to say!"

"Why, Tom Wilbour! What *do* you mean?"

Susy came in from the bath-room, holding her red wrapper excitedly about her, one little bare foot sunk in the rug.

"'GONE TO THE DOGS! ALAS, POOR BINKS!'"

"Poor child! poor child! 'Here a little and there a little,' as the Psalmist—or Shakespeare —or Franklin—said, 'line upon line, precept—'"

"For heaven's sake, Tom, what is it?"

"'—upon precept,'" the orator continued, gloomily, oblivious, apparently, of any but his intended audience, "but he wasn't worth it in the end. A good baby and a kind one, he couldn't stand the pace."

"I don't know what you're talking about," Susy remarked, coiling her hair more composedly, "but 'precept upon precept' wasn't the Psalmist—that's David. It was—er—it was—well, you know who it was, Tommy, somewhere in the middle of the Bible."

"Ruth!" Mr. Wilbour exclaimed, with the air of a desperate Sunday-school scholar driven into a hole.

"Of course not."

"Lamentations?" he ventured, with a pathetic seriousness.

"How absurd!"

"I know—the Apocrypha—if that's what you call it. We never had any in our Bible. But I know a man that had. And it was in the exact middle, the ex—act middle!"

"Now there's where you're wrong," Susy answered briskly. "It comes between the Old and

"'WHY, TOM WILBOUR! WHAT *DO* YOU MEAN?'"

New Testament, and the Old Testament is ever so much longer, more than twice—or three times. Or four, maybe. So it's *not* in the middle, it's about three-quarters—"

"My poor girl, I meant the actual middle, not the apparent one of mere pages. Could anything be more middle—or middler, if you like—than the division between the two chief parts of the Bible?"

Tom leaned back judicially, his elbows bearing his weight on the bar of the crib; Susy stood in an argumentative attitude on one foot, nursing the other to keep it warm. To Aunt Emma, who approached at this point for her morning call on her grandnephew, their uncomfortable positions were equalled only by their extraordinary discussion.

"The middle of the Bible," Susy declared warmly, giving an involuntary hop to restore the balance her emphasis had endangered, "is where the middle of any book is—you divide the number of pages by two. Everybody knows that, Tommy."

"The middle of the Bible," her husband insisted, slipping on the brass rim and catching himself by the elbows with more difficulty than grace, "is where Births, Marriages, and Deaths is, and anybody who doesn't know that—"

"SUSY STOOD IN AN ARGUMENTATIVE ATTITUDE"

"But suppose there weren't any in your Bible? There aren't in mine."

"Then there ought to be, and you've got a mighty poor one, Toots, that's all I have to say, and you ought to change it the first chance you get."

With this triumphant retort Mr. Wilbour very nearly lost his hold on the crib and went through gymnastic feats of unusual distinction in order to regain it without moving his hands, to the frank admiration of his wife.

Aunt Emma could endure no more, and strode into the room.

"Are you out of your minds?" she demanded. "What is the matter with you? Susy, put your foot down this moment! Have you hurt it?"

"No, Aunt Emma, I only happened—"

"And Tom, may I ask you if it is your intention to spend the morning here arguing over the middle of the Bible? I could not have believed it if I hadn't heard it. Such utter nonsense—"

"On the contrary, Aunt Emma," her nephew interrupted, wrapping his bath-robe modestly about him and assuming an oratorical attitude, "it is a matter of more impor—"

"It is a matter of no importance whatever," Miss Wilbour concluded summarily. "This is a

"ASSUMING AN ORATORICAL ATTITUDE"

very sudden interest on your part, too. If you would read your Bible more and discuss it less—"

He fled to his room, and Aunt Emma turned her attention upon her niece.

"And you are every whit as bad, Susy. What possessed you to begin such a subject before you were dressed?"

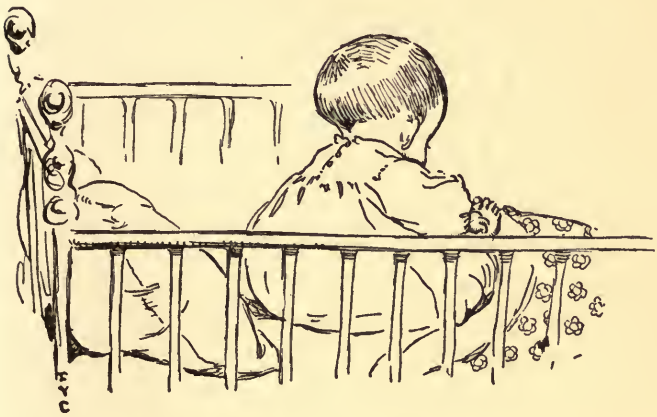
"It was Tom," Susy admitted with a giggle; "he was saying that the poor baby had nobody but his parents, and a lot of nonsense, and some way or other we got on to the Apocrypha."

Miss Wilbour still looked doubtful, but the reference to the baby's deserted condition evidently touched and pleased her, and she bent over his crib without further comment.

"Did Aunt Emma go away and leave Martin? Well, here she is back again," she announced, "and she didn't forget him, either—not a minute of the time."

The object of this constancy rewarded it with a perfunctory smile and resumed the contemplation of his toes. These, to his never-failing and delighted surprise, continued to be ten in number, no matter how suddenly and without warning he descended upon them; his startled cataloguing of the suspicious members constituted at present his chief employment, and the subsequent deep breath of relief on finding that

all was well and not one of them had escaped his vigilance was one of the joys of his parents. Tom evolved from this recent interest the theory



"THE OBJECT OF THIS CONSTANCY RESUMED THE CONTEMPLATION OF HIS TOES"

that Martin would grow up to one of two fates: "Either he'll be a car-conductor or—"

At Aunt Emma's indignant interruption to the effect that he ought not to say that Martin would ever grow up to be a car-conductor, Tom would blandly inquire if she would rather infer that the child would die in youth, whereupon Susy would weep, and his immediate and effective consola-

tion interfered with his ever explaining the second possible fate of his son.

Aunt Emma's absent thoughts of her grand-nephew had not been without fruit, for on seeing Susy in train for a proper completion of her toilet, she left the room, to return shortly with a large flat box in her hand.

"A friend of Cousin Ella's had just given one of these to a young friend of hers, Susy," she explained, "and I thought how it would be just the thing for you and Martin—I wish we'd had it before. Isn't it a sweet idea?"

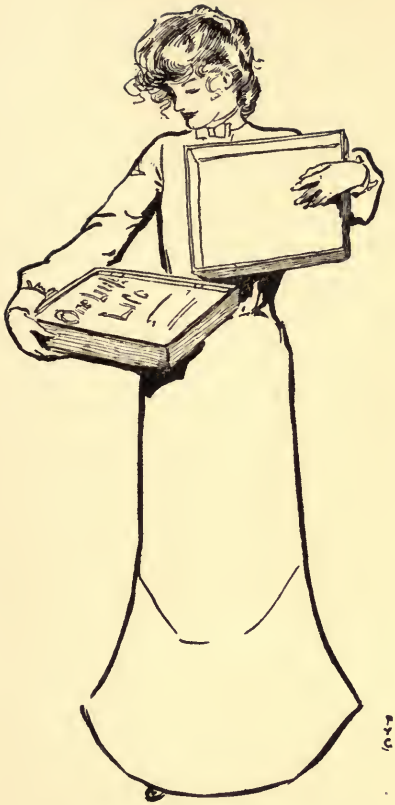
Opening the box with interest, Susy drew forth a large, elaborately bound blank book: the covers were of burnt leather; the binding, laced pieces of the same material; the leaves, thick, creamy paper. It had come, without doubt, from a Woman's Exchange. The title, artistically burnt in straggling Japanese letters, read as follows:

One Little Life:
For Baby and Mother,

and below ran some lines of pleasing doggerel.

Keep this, mother, for me,
And when I'm grown up you'll see
Just what I used to be!

"Why, yes, indeed, Aunt Emma! What do you do with it?"



"'WHAT DO YOU DO WITH IT?'"

"You see, it's a diary, Susy, and you put down all the events of his life, as they come. First his birthday, you know, and then his name and the christening party, and—"

"But he didn't have any, Aunt Emma!"

"Oh, well, leave that page out, then, of course, but it's a pity, the picture for it is so pretty. Here's where they all sign, you see. Then here are their presents, and they write down their wishes for the baby—"

"Aunt Ella wished he mightn't grow up so near-sighted as Tommy," Susy murmured reminiscently. "How would that do to put down, Aunt Emma?"

"What nonsense, my dear! How ridiculous! It doesn't mean that sort of thing. Really serious wishes—"

"But she was serious. Goodness, Aunt Emma, if you knew how conceited Aunt Ella is about her eyes, and how she pities everybody so that wears glasses—"

"I have known Ella Wilbour for fifty years, my dear, twenty-six years before you—"

"Yes, I know. What kind of wishes do they put in?"

"Why, pleasant, poetical-sounding things, Susy. You know what I mean. Of course if one of them happens to be a clergyman, they always do that

sort of thing nicely. This friend of Ella's had hers pretty well made out—her baby was three years old—and she was delighted to show it to us. An uncle of hers was a clergyman, secretary of the House of Bishops, and he wrote such a charming wish—he wrote so beautifully, too—about his little white feet wandering through this dark, soiled earth, and then walking up to heaven just as white as they were now, some day, after long years—"

"Great Scott!" the voice of her nephew interposed, "who was this? What was the matter with him, anyway? Did I hear you say it was a secretary? It sounds more like—or perhaps you meant a piece of furniture?"

"You'd better go on down-town, Tom—you'll be late.

"We'll skip that page, then, Susy, and pass on to the next. Here's his weight. Isn't that a cunning picture?—and then you can put it down every week for a while, and then every month."

"But we haven't got it, Aunt Emma—except just the first one or two. After Dr. Blanchard said he was doing so well and gaining so regularly, nobody weighed him particularly, that I know, or anyway, we didn't keep it."

"Oh, well, we'll just let that go—though Ella's friend had every single blank filled in," Miss Wil-

bour returned, "he gained surprisingly. But then, he was very small to begin with. Now comes his first picture; you see here's a place to fit it in. We can use that one that Cousin Theodore didn't want because of the smudge on the corner.

"Then here's the first thing he seemed to notice. Mrs. Ward's baby was being held up by the window one day, and he looked straight at the clouds —they were big, heavy ones—and tried to point at them; and her sister is an artist, and she sketched the prettiest little landscape in here—mostly clouds—and colored it in water-colors. It was really lovely."

"But, Aunt Emma, what could we put here? because you know Binks noticed everything from the moment he opened his eyes."

"Susy, my dear!"

"Oh, more or less, I mean. Everybody always said so. His eyes never looked that horrid, swimmy, empty way."

"Well, there must have been one first thing that you thought of at the time, Susy."

"I don't believe I remember—it never occurred to me somehow, Aunt Emma, to think I ought to notice. I always thought he saw everything."

At Aunt Emma's look of resignation Susy frowned strenuously and struggled with her recreant memory. Presently she was rewarded.

"Oh, I do remember!" she cried, with relief. "I know Mary did say to me once, 'There, now, Mrs. Wilbour, if you'll see him taking notice!'

"It was when that plaster fell in the parlor, and I'd begun to come down-stairs, and Mary had the baby in her arms, and he looked at the hole in the wall and laughed at it. That was it, Aunt Emma, that hole!"

Aunt Emma looked highly dissatisfied. She fluttered the pages of the book nervously.

"Are you sure you're right, Susy?" she asked, "quite sure?"

"Why, yes, Aunt Emma. That's why I was thinking so hard—to make sure."

"But I don't believe anybody — *anybody*," Aunt Emma announced with severity, "could make a pretty picture out of a hole!"

"N-no," Susy agreed after a moment, "no, I don't suppose they could. But it's the first thing he saw."

"It wouldn't be very interesting-looking, even," Aunt Emma objected again.

"I know, and it wouldn't be easy to make a picture of, anyway. But it is the first thing he saw."

"I think," said Aunt Emma, with decision, "that we will think up some pretty thing that he noticed, one that Valeria Bell can make a good

picture of for this page. She does some things very nicely. She really succeeds best with trees," she went on, pausing tentatively here, as if to give Susy time to recall her son's early ecstasies at the welcome sight of some of his favorite forest monarchs.

But Susy failed to rise to this bait.

"Of course, Aunt Emma," she agreed, but evidently with only a perfunctory interest, now that all her thoughtful memory had gone for nothing—"of course if you mean that Binks must have noticed other things besides that hole in the parlor wall, I agree with you perfectly. He has probably often looked at a great many beautiful things. But that *was* the first thing he saw."

Aunt Emma shut the book forcibly.

"You have the most exasperating habit of repeating yourself sometimes, Susy," she stated succinctly, and departed, the book under her arm, a habit she had of dealing with gifts felt by her to be insufficiently appreciated.

But her temper was well recovered by dinnertime, and her spirit soothed by Mary's providential recollection of her grandnephew's instant and early appreciation of an obstreperous and overgrown rubber-plant long dear to her heart. Valeria could compass its irregularities with ease, she was sure, and she unfolded the plan to her

nephew at dinner, who nodded cordially when asked to corroborate Mary's story, having been mentioned by her as an eye-witness to the event.

"You can bet he noticed it, Aunt Emma," the youthful observer's father agreed. "So far as that—that rubber-plant goes, that child is a regular Rollo at Work. And why? Because it's in his blood. The fathers have barked their knees over that rubber-plant, Aunt Emma, and the children's nerves are set on edge. That's *pourquoi*, if you want to know."

He was shown the book after dinner, with his son's early failures to shine in the first pages of it glossed over.

"Now here," explained Aunt Emma, "is when he first walked. To think we have no picture! But we can take a view of the room, and then mark a cross where he stood."

"No, you won't!" Susy cried abruptly. "I won't have it done. It will look as if he was dead, Aunt Emma! You sha'n't!"

"Why, Susy, what a perfectly ridiculous idea! How could it possibly? You have the most extraordinary fancies. But of course if you insist, we won't take any picture."

"Oh, dear, Aunt Emma, take all the pictures you want to, but don't mark the cross: that's what I mean. Don't you see how dreadful—"

"No, I don't. However, that's not my affair, Susy. Now here is where he first talked — his very first syllable—and then his first real word. Mrs. Ward had hers done in gold ink—wasn't that sweet?"

"As Binks isn't speaking for publication just now, he can't qualify there," his father observed easily. "Now, Toots, don't be a blessed little idiot."

It was a matter of sickening embarrassment to young Mrs. Wilbour that her son, though in every other regard the proud superior of most of his years, as yet refused to open his lips for any other purpose than to receive nourishment. Unsoothed by the repeated statements that his father and grandfather had attained conversational powers late in life, she revolved in her mind the prowess of Dorothy Sears, who, one inferred, held conversations upon the simpler domestic problems with her parents at the age of eight months.

"Oh, we'll soon fill this up," Miss Wilbour assured them hastily, and went on. "Here's his first tooth—you sew it on here—"

"Good Lord! do you pull it out to put it in that book? Doesn't he get any use of it?" demanded his father. "Of all the mean tricks—"

"Why, Tom, when he's all through with it, of course—"

"Oh, when he's cast it, you mean." Mr. Wilbour nodded comprehendingly. "Oh, well, that's all right, if you like the idea. Myself—"

"I think it's perfectly disgusting," Susy broke forth, "and it makes me sick to think of sewing a tooth on to anything. And I wouldn't have a tooth of my baby sewed there for worlds and worlds. So there!"

She picked up a novel and read aggressively. Aunt Emma stared in amazement. Mr. Wilbour smiled.

"There's One Little Life that isn't laying by material for the biographers, anyhow," he murmured gently.

V

WHICH DEALS WITH CHILD-STUDY IN THE HOME

"OF course," Aunt Emma added regretfully, "it won't be as if we had begun it from the very first. One of these books tells about the very first hour—its eyeballs moved in unison. Did you notice, Susy, how soon Martin winked? I suppose you didn't."

"Heavens, no!" Mrs. Wilbour declared, "but he probably did, didn't he? Directly, I mean. You have to wink, you know, Aunt Emma."

Aunt Emma smiled in a superior manner.

"These things aren't so simple as they seem, my dear," she explained. "For instance, let me read you this. You know what a time we had trying to find out what he looked at first—really saw? Well, do you know what happens then? It's explained here."

From three books in her lap she selected one, and read from it to her attentive niece, who was

making lace and chiffon stock-collars out of a fascinating pile of odds and ends:

"*This was what the baby had done, and I do not dare to say how many philosophical and psychological discussions are involved in her doing it. Professor Le Conte thinks that it shows an inborn sense of direction, since the eyes are turned, not towards the side on which the ray strikes the retina, but towards the side from which the ray enters the eye; that is, the baby thinks out along the line of the ray to the object it comes from, thus putting the object outside himself, in space, as we do. Professor Wundt, the great German—*"

"Good heavens! Aunt Emma Wilbour, what does that mean? Because if you understand it, I don't. Which is the retina, anyhow? That middle part—no, that's the pupil. Is it the light kind of ring around it, or the white part? Do you notice that the whites of his eyes are blue? Just like Tom's. Would you join this with fagoting, or just feather-stitch it together?"

"Really, Susy, I don't know. How many of those things are you going to make? Ever since you learned how, you have done nothing else: one would think sewing was a game."

"But it's such fun—and this is for you, Aunt Emma!"

"Why, that's very kind of you, my dear, I'm

sure. I think you do the fagoting very nicely, though the feather-stitching is always neat," and Aunt Emma examined the fluffy creation with interest, while the page devoted to Professor Wundt, that great German, turned over all unnoticed and was lost to view.

But what Miss Wilbour was wont to refer to as "the principle of the thing" was far from being plunged into oblivion; and as Susy insisted upon her utter inability to comprehend the scientific value of a record of the strength of her son's neck muscles from the day of his birth, or an investigation of his perception of the high lights on the cheek-bones of the human countenance as distinct from patches of sunshine on the wall, her aunt took up the task, and the unconscious Martin became the victim of her tireless note-book and pencil.

While the young gentleman himself appeared absolutely indifferent to this remorseless supervision, so much could not be said for his little nursemaid. For some reason she conceived an inexplicable horror of the small red leather book that became as characteristic a portion of Miss Wilbour's attire as her glasses, and took a malicious pleasure in concealing Martin as much as possible from observation. As he was a very quiet child this was no difficult feat, and since

"CONCEALING MARTIN"

Aunt Emma scorned direct inquiry as to his whereabouts, a sort of still-hunt through the house was in continual process—a never-failing delight to Mr. Thomas Wilbour, whom his aunt almost suspected of tipping Belle with a tacit appreciation of her obstinate stand against science.

"What does she do, Toots?" her husband demanded curiously one Sunday morning. "That child never opens his mouth, and he only walks when he has to. Does she draw pictures of him sprawling around? Or does she just make marks in the book in order to drive Belle to drink? That girl will be moved to crime soon—I see it in her eyes."

"Hush, Tommy! Go up and look, if you want to know. I think they're in the nursery."

They tiptoed up together and peered through the balusters. Upon the floor, stretched on his back on an afghan, lay their son, motionless as a Buddha, contemplative of the ceiling. In a low chair by the window, rocking furiously, sat Belle, her lips flattened somewhat viciously, her hands grasping an orange - colored novel. Her eyes, however, were not concerned with the book, but with the movements of Miss Wilbour, who sat by the opposite window, a red pencil in her right hand, a red note-book in her left. Except for the creaking of the rocker, the room was silent.

Belle furtively watched Aunt Emma, who openly stared at Martin Brinkerhoff, who serenely regarded the ceiling; and to the spectators on the stairs the group seemed charged with mystery. They pressed each other's hands and inquired in dumb show if it would be safe to break the spell, but moved by a common impulse, withdrew softly.

"How long will they sit there?" Mr. Wilbour inquired in a whisper as they gained the lower hall. "They look like Jarley wax-works at a Sunday-school entertainment. What *does* Aunt Emma think she's doing?"

"It's in that blue book. She showed it to Belle, to let her see what she was acting that way for. Here it is—she turned the page down."

Susy pointed to an underscored sentence, and her husband read it aloud:

"We can all, no doubt, as Rousseau says, '*sit reverently at the feet of infancy, watching and learning.*'

"Oh! I see. But what is Aunt Emma learning now? How to protect herself when Belle jumps on her? Binks is far from troublesome, but surely he is not instructive, my dear?"

"Oh, don't ask me, Tommy. I must say I think it's queer—he doesn't do a thing. It seems as if he knew Aunt Emma wanted to write the

things down, and he just lies still and smiles to himself. I wish to goodness he'd do something."

Mr. Wilbour chuckled. "Perhaps he does things when her back's turned—he's equal to it!" he observed.

"That's just it, Tom. Belle tells the greatest lot of cunning things he does when she takes him out; but she won't tell Aunt Emma, she just tells me. And Aunt Emma won't write those down; she says Belle's not to be trusted. I can hardly keep the peace between them."

"Let's see the book, anyhow," Mr. Wilbour suggested. "Where'd she get it?"

"Why, Miss Utleigh recommended it to the club, and they are to bring in reports and read them, and Aunt Emma feels so ashamed because Binks won't do a thing. Of course, eleven months is just a kind of *between* age, you see, and most of the children are younger or older. When they talk you can put down every word, and make out lists; and when they notice sounds and people and things like that, you know, when they're just a few months, you can tell about that. But the way he counts his toes and the time he walked in the bag are just about all Aunt Emma has to describe, and she wants more."

"I see." Tom was flirting the leaves of the

blue book. Suddenly he paused. "For heaven's sake!" he murmured. "Toots, will you lend me your attention for a moment?

"*The same day he saw a dog across the street. He looked intently at him and said something that sounded like 'Wow! wow!' He frequently says it upon seeing a little boy. He did it to-day, his manner showing distinctly that he meant it for the boy.*

"Toots, that demented infant was fourteen months old! Has the woman no shame? To have a child like that, and publish it to the world! If any son of mine barked when he saw a little boy, I'd — I'd — I'd take steps. Binks may not talk much, but I'll bet he can tell a boy from a dog!"

"Of course he can!" his mother returned indignantly. "He knows a great deal more than he says. He won't lie on the rug any more, because he likes the afghan better, and he makes Belle get it every time. It's just the same as talking, if he makes her understand," she added argumentatively.

"Just the same? It's better!" Mr. Wilbour promptly agreed. "Pantomime is a very great art. Don't you know how Coquelin sits down with a newspaper and makes you see everything he's reading by the expression of his face? Mur-

ders, and the stock-market, and elopements, and funny stories that he can't read to his wife, and the incoming steamers? It's all pantomime."

"Tommy, how absurd!"

"Not at all. A fellow told me about it. Said you saw every word, just as if you were reading. If Binks doesn't grow up to be a car-conductor, he'll probably be— Susan Martin Wilbour, will you listen to this?"

Standing solemnly, as if to give his elocutionary feat greater significance, Mr. Wilbour read the following extraordinary statement from the record Aunt Emma was vainly emulating:

"*He objected to a Raff concerto for violin and piano, but tolerated Handel's Largo, though with a quiver of his lip. This was before he was four months old.*

"Now, Toots, you know this isn't right. This is awful. If Aunt Emma is feeding her mind on this sort of stuff, 'twere best that some one reason with her. No wonder Belle feels as she does. 'Though with a quiver of his lip!' Do you mark that? Oh, my poor aunt!"

"Oh, well, of course the book is crazy," Susy remarked comfortably. "I told Aunt Emma so. There is a part in it she read me about this child being a perfect automaton, and always sleeping at the same time no matter what happened.

There was a band playing right next them when he took his nap, and a man with a trumpet, but the child didn't care. She didn't like it because I told her that if a lion came roaring after Binks I'd rather he'd wake up and cry, and then we could help him—though I suppose we'd hear the lion when he roared as soon as we'd hear Binks," she added honestly.

"Um," Mr. Wilbour returned absently. "Listen to this, will you?

"*At this time a single voice singing would not quiet him, but two voices singing in parts would invariably have the desired soothing effect.*

"Good thing he didn't require a male quartet, wasn't it? Tasty infant, this. My country! What do you suppose he is to-day? Toots, did we ever sing in parts to the kiddy?"

"Of course not, Tommy! Don't be silly."

"Well, let's. We can't have a quartet, because neither Aunt Emma nor Belle can sing bass, and you can't have a quartet without any bass, but— Oh, I say, Toots, can you and Belle and Aunt Em sing that thing that three women always sing about 'Lift thine eyes to the mountains'?"

"No, we can't. You are too senseless."

"Then we'll have to sing a duet. What duet do we know?"

"We don't know any," said Susy, giggling irrepressibly.

"Well, then, we'll have to learn one, that's all. Do you know the one that ends, 'Oh, Leono-o-ra, fare thee well'?"

"No, I don't, and neither do you," Susy replied promptly.

"Oh, we won't discuss that. Do you know that one where the dark lady lies on the cot-bed and they sing, '*Back* to our *mou*-ountains'?"

"I know that better, but only the tune. I don't believe you know the words yourself."

"I seem to know more duets than you, my dear," Mr. Wilbour suggested airily, "but here's another chance. Do you know that one where I say, ''Tis the lark!' and you say, ''Tis the nightingale!' and then I say, ''Tis the lark!' and you say, ''Tis the nightingale!' and then we both wind up together, 'that sings from yonder tree,' each one backing our own bird?"

"Oh yes, I know that one!" Susy cried with enthusiasm, "a girl and I used to sing it at school. She could sing tenor. And I say, '*Wi*-ilt *thou*-ou *be*-ee gone?' and you say, '*I*—I *mu*-ust *be*-ee gone!'"

"Precisely," her husband remarked gravely. "The very song. Let us ascend immediately and sing it to Binks. Aunt Em can write about it subsequently, and make the club sit up."

They went up-stairs hand in hand, to find Belle scarlet with suppressed rage and Aunt Emma writing busily in her little book. She added a final triumphant period as they entered the room and smiled cheerfully on the baby.

"It has been so interesting, Susy!" she cried. "I did so wish you were here and took an interest in child-study. As one of the authors says, if people only knew the fascination of seeing a child's mind develop, as it lies on a blanket, watching things around it, they would never need to go to the matinée!"

"Ye-es," Susy answered doubtfully, "but I think I prefer the matinée, Aunt Emma. As a steady thing, you know."

"Toots and I have come up to sing in parts to Binks," Mr. Wilbour observed abruptly, "but before we begin, let's see your notes, Aunt Emma, will you?"

Miss Wilbour handed him the red book without a word. He opened it at the latest date, and read aloud:

"Martin, eleven months and thirteen days. Was lying on afghan on floor in perfect silence, when suddenly dropped the empty bottle he plays with. Could not find it. Said *ă* (the sound of *a* in *pan*) three times in dissatisfied tone, then changed to the broad *ā*. Clutched the bottle—I

"BELLE SCARLET WITH SUPPRESSED RAGE AND AUNT EMMA WRITING BUSILY IN HER LITTLE BOOK"

think accidentally—and made a peculiar sound expressive of pleasure. Has made it before. Impossible to spell."

"He choked. Wind in his stummick," Belle announced, impersonally but firmly.

Aunt Emma bit her lip. "I have told you, Belle—" she began, but stopped.

For her niece and nephew, standing before their son, who lay looking up at them with interest, suddenly burst forth into song.

"Wi-ilt thou-ou be-ee gone?"
"I—I mu-ust be-ee gone!"

they warbled in unison, and then Susy, to quote her husband, backed the nightingale enthusiastically throughout one stanza, while Belle and Aunt Emma stared in dumb amaze.

"It is the lark, the herald of the dawn, love,
No nightingale!"

"Oh, good heavens, that's too high!" ejaculated Mr. Wilbour crossly. Dropping to a suitable pitch, he proceeded to give his reasons for departure, ending dramatically, with much action, which greatly delighted Belle:

"I must be gone and li-ive, love,
*Or stay with thee-ee-*EE *and die!"*

At this point Susy became frankly hysterical,

and only the most charitably inclined could have distinguished the final cadenza through her gasps and gurgles.

Martin Brinkerhoff had followed the duet with growing uneasiness, and as his mother's confusion of emotions became more and more apparent, and his father's gestures more and more violent, his face screwed itself into unaccustomed lines, and just as the end of the song declared itself in a burst of laughter, a loud roar from the object of all these experiments threw the nurse and mother into contrite attitudes on the afghan.

"Susy and Tom, you've frightened him. Go out, and let Belle take him!" Aunt Emma commanded, and the culprits stole out shamefacedly, to listen at the door while Belle intoned to the nerve-shattered Binks a doleful melody, sacred to his sleep, whose words related the awful experiences of "Roy Neil and his fair young bride," ending with the lines,

"And the ship went down with the fair young bride
That sailed from Dublin Bay!"

"Evidently singing in parts doesn't appeal to them all," Mr. Wilbour ventured softly, when quiet reigned at length, "we didn't seem to soothe him much."

"You ought to be ashamed," Susy upbraided

him, "it was all your fault, Tom Wilbour! Scaring my own baby! What will Belle think?"

Tom stared. "If that's what worries you, Toots, I wouldn't lie awake long," he assured her. "Belle will lay it all to the red book and Aunt Emma. She thinks it's a hoodoo, that book."

"So do I. I think it's mean to watch everything he does when he doesn't know it. Aunt Emma wouldn't like it herself."

"You'll notice she doesn't get much show, however," Mr. Wilbour returned with a grin. "He covers his tracks—develops round the corner, as it were. Don't you suppose he knows that foolish book when he sees it? Belle told me last night that he had to repair to the laundry to learn to sneeze with any—any *chic* at all."

"Why, Tom, what do you mean?"

"Just what I say. She eloped with him to the laundry, and there he practised till he could sneeze with that airy grace that distinguishes him at present. She told me with triumph that when Aunt Emma heard him she was carried away by the style and finish of the thing, and wrote it down under the impression that she was assisting at a first-night production. There's where Belle got in one, eh?"

"It's the most ridiculous thing I ever heard of,"

Susy declared. "I don't know what to do. Belle is such a good girl, but she gets almost saucy to Aunt Emma sometimes, Tom. Wednesday she took him in the bath-room and sat with him there. I don't dare to seem to notice it, because I shall have to reprove Belle if I do."

"I gather that the kid that tolerated Handel's Largo (though with a quiver of his lip) didn't employ this kind of nurse?" Tom suggested.

"No, indeed. Aunt Emma read me what kind the nurse ought to be—it's in the front."

Susy searched for a passage in the blue book and read from it in the detached and mechanical manner she consecrated to everything but fiction.

"*The aid of a trained kindergartner of inspiring personality, or of at least a refined and educated nursery maid, may be secured, if possible, very early in the life of a child. One, however, should be selected who has learned the value of repose.*"

"Oh, nonsense!" Mr. Wilbour interrupted. "This is all wrong, Toots! If there's one thing Belle hasn't got. . . . She carries out three abductions a day! The poor child's early recollections will be one continual Eliza-on-the-floating-cakes-of-ice kinetoscope. All we need is two Topsys and a bloodhound to—"

"Hush, Tom! And here's the end of the sen-

tence: *and who can subordinate method as a means for the development of mental and moral growth.* There — that's the kind. Do you see what it means?"

"No, thank God," said her husband piously, "but I know that it's just as well I don't. There are things that one leads a happier and purer life in ignorance of, my dear; which sounds awkward, but you see. In my besotted ignorance I thought that it was method that made the kindergartner — the lack of it, the woman, as the poet says. I thought it was method or nothing with 'em. If they subordinate it— But perhaps that means—"

"Oh, don't discuss it, Tommy; it makes my head ache! You'll never see. Aunt Emma doesn't understand that part very well herself. Only she thinks Belle's wrong."

"Oh yes, I guess she's wrong, all right," Mr. Wilbour assented gloomily. "Whatever method she has, she doesn't subordinate it, that's one sure thing. Give me the book, Toots."

Opening at random, he read aloud with a cold scorn:

"*He has said 'pease' for please since the middle of August, also 'ang you,' for thank you.*

"Is this the kind of thing my misguided relative is going to read to the club?" he inquired.

"Will there be two hundred pages of it? Heaven help the lad that inspired this thing! Imagine him when he's grown up! Think of your friends fixing you with their eagle eyes and reaching up to the bookshelf and saying, 'Ah yes! Let me see. Did you know that on September eleventh you said "hugar" for sugar?' Is there no privacy, no sacred solitude of the soul, no— Oh, it's disgusting!"

It was somewhat characteristic of Mr. Wilbour that directly after this outburst he set himself to work at a volume of child-study of his own.

This was entitled *Sherlock at Home; or, The Sleuth-Hound of the Nursery*, and was elaborated by him in his leisure moments down-town, to be read to the scandalized family after dinner.

"*May nineteenth.*—Martin one year old. Boston Symphony engaged for purposes of comparison with New York Philharmonic, as heard one month ago. B. S. rendition of Pastoral Symphony fairly soothing, but N. Y. P. in Funeral March from Götterdämmerung distinctly enervating. Effect of oboe particularly unfortunate. Plans for the Meistersinger quintet next week in event of de Reszke's recovery.

"*May twenty-third.*—Martin one year and four days old. Said 'ngrmph' and 'mga' distinctly. Evidently meant that he preferred his father in

a dull green tie to a black with brown spots, by first ejaculation; second more doubtful, but from gestures I infer that he was commenting, in his unformed, baby way, on the inscrutable mysteries, as they must appear to him, of Pasteurization."

"You may laugh if you like, Tom," Aunt Emma complained, "but if every mother in the country took such notes, it would have a distinct effect on science."

"I don't doubt it for a moment, my dear aunt —not for a moment. If ever science comes in competition with our notes," Mr. Wilbour exclaimed enthusiastically, "I can tell you one thing, Aunt Emma, it 'll be down and out the first round!"

VI

WHICH CONTINUES TO DEAL WITH CHILD-STUDY AT HOME

"TOM dear, if Binks should ask you what a gas was—"

"In heaven's name, Toots, what *do* you mean?"

Mr. Wilbour dropped his tooth-brush hastily, and unconscious of the fact that he still retained the blue tin of powder in his hand, strode out of the bath-room.

"I mean what I say. If Binks should ask us —oh, not to-day, you silly, but later on—what a gas was, what would you say?"

It was Susy's habit, when struck suddenly by a new idea, to stop short in anything she might be doing and revolve the new matter as thoroughly as possible—usually in the precise attitude in which it had first occurred to her. At this moment she stood before the mirror, staring absently into it, her hair gathered into a preparatory handful at the top of her head.

"HER HAIR GATHERED INTO A PREPARATORY HANDFUL AT THE TOP OF HER HEAD"

"You look like an illustration in the advertisement part of a magazine," her husband observed appreciatively—"'The first gray hair! How can she prevent it? By using—'"

"Oh, Tommy! Now I've got to get it all up again! . . . How silly! Of course I must. I can't go around this way. Do you really think it's prettier?"

"I don't think anything about it—I know," Mr. Wilbour returned decidedly. "I fell in love with the seven What-do-you-call-'em Sisters at the age of sixteen, and I never got over it. Only they never knew anything about it," he added pensively, "and so nothing came of it. There was one that had two yards. It went around three sides of the bottle, and—"

"It's a pity you couldn't have married her," his wife commented, "then you could have travelled about and seen more of the world."

"But there was one difficulty in the way," he confided, pulling her hair down over her ears and regarding the resulting demure effect critically in the glass. "With my modest, not to say retiring, disposition, how could I have endured sitting in the windows of the drug-stores where she exhibited? I couldn't have kept away, and yet I should have fainted if compelled—"

"May I speak to you a moment, Susy?"

"AND REGARDING THE RESULTING DEMURE EFFECT CRITICALLY IN THE GLASS"

At the sound of Aunt Emma's voice they started guiltily apart. Susy began twisting up her hair, blushing furiously, and Tom, as if the Montagues and Capulets were clashing in the hall, fled to his room, but too late.

For an emphatic exclamation from Aunt Emma drew their eyes to the floor, where the blue tin of tooth-powder rolled placidly along in its disgusted owner's wake, spilling a white and odorous trail in its telltale course. From Susy to her husband the white line curved, and from one to the other Aunt Emma's glance leaped swiftly.

"What are you doing?" she demanded. "What is that on the floor? Sugar?" For the tin had concealed itself for the moment behind its master's shoes.

"What is it?" Tom repeated vaguely. "I—I'll see." He picked up the blue object and examined it critically. "Ah, yes! it is Dr. Brown's perfect tooth-powder. At least that's what it says on the box," he added. "Did you want it for anything, Aunt Emma?"

Between Susy's convulsed laughter and her nephew's impressive politeness Aunt Emma's curiosity grew apace.

"Of course it is no affair of mine, Tom and Susy, if you choose to cover the floor with tooth-

"FROM SUSY TO HER HUSBAND THE WHITE LINE CURVED"

powder," she began, "but Susy was doing her hair fully fifteen minutes ago, and—"

"I know, Aunt Emma, and it's all done now. You see, what stopped me was thinking about what I should do when the baby began to ask questions like that one about gas, and so I called Tommy in, and he—he—well, you know how silly Tommy can be, Aunt Emma!"

"You don't mean that Martin has—"

"No," Susy admitted hastily, "he hasn't yet, but when he *does* talk, and asks those dreadful questions like that boy in the book—"

"In my book," Tom inquired, "or Aunt Em's, or the woman's?"

"The woman's. He asked his mother what gas was, and she wasn't able—"

"What? Wasn't able? Come, come, Toots, this is ridiculous. Why I, even I, can tell what gas is, and what am I beside that woman?"

"Well, what would you say?"

"Why, gas is—well, of course you can't give a perfectly clear idea—"

"Aha! I knew you couldn't—I knew it!" Susy cried triumphantly.

"If you will wait a moment," her husband continued with dignity, "till I have finished my sentence, you will be showing better manners, and incidentally, you'll hear what I have to say.

"Gas—that is, for all practical working purposes, for of course you wouldn't expect to explain to a child—"

"Ah, but that's just it!" Susy interrupted eagerly, "that's just the point! You mustn't say anything that won't be perfectly true when he's grown up, you see. It's learning two sets of things that makes a child distrust you. When they grow up they find out that what you said wasn't so, and so you must always tell the exact truth. The ve-ry ex-act truth. Like Santa Claus and finding babies in cabbages, you know."

"Susy!"

"Well, I can't help it, Aunt Emma. I *do* think that's so."

"Do you mean to tell me, Susy Wilbour, that if Martin were to ask you—"

"Oh, I don't know, Aunt Emma, I don't know! That's what I'm making up my mind about."

"It seems to me that I wouldn't lie awake long about that just now," suggested Mr. Wilbour judicially. "He hasn't been annoying you much on that subject lately, has he?"

"Of course not."

"Very well. Now in the matter of gas, while I'm not prepared to give a stereopticon lecture on the subject, as I said, at the same time there are a few simple phrases which, adjusted ac-

cording to age, and presented in an attractive, unassuming way, would make any child not only comprehend, but, as Isaac Newton or Galileo or Edison said—"

"Tommy, I don't believe you have any idea what you're talking about! I don't believe you know any more about what a gas is than I do!"

"Oh, you don't! Well then, I'll tell you. A gas is something you mustn't blow out in a hotel! Pooh!"

The scientist disappeared swiftly into his room, Susy giggled, and Aunt Emma endeavored to collect the tooth-powder from the floor without sneezing.

The conversation of the morning had evidently impressed Mr. Wilbour, for that evening he produced a new instalment of *Sherlock at Home* and offered to read it to his disapproving but unconquerably curious family.

It was his habit, on such occasions, politely to offer Aunt Emma the first opportunity of exploiting her own observations of his son's progress, and afterwards to follow her with a becoming modesty; when she had no material to offer, as was often the case, her nephew would smile kindly at her, implying that she was not to be too hardly censured for her manifest defeat at the hands

of the tireless Belle, and proceed to declaim from his own notes.

This order of things prevailed on the night in question: Martin had been kept out-of-doors nearly all day, and the red book had slumbered on Aunt Emma's work-table.

"My report to-night," Tom began, in a business-like tone, "is based on data given by my esteemed contemporary whose studies in child growth and development first induced me to take up this work on my own account. I quote the following sentence: *He obeys us at all times, but one must give him time to adjust himself to what he is to do. . . .*

"I want to make a digression here, Aunt Emma, and suggest that if you had given me time to adjust myself after you'd informed me what I was to do, I might have been a different man. But, no; I had to get busy and fall in with your ideas *tout de suite*, as it were. So I never got a chance to go on with what I was doing. It saved time, doubtless, but what a lot of entertainment I missed! Nobody hurried this young man, and if you do the right thing by him, nobody will hurry Binks. As follows:

"*April sixteenth.* — Martin observed box of matches and tried to reach it; showed signs of temper on failing to do so. Wishing to avoid any

such state of mind in him, we gave him the box immediately, only explaining that he was not to light them, as that might produce disastrous results. It must be that he failed to understand the explanation, for he began to scratch them on the box directly. We decided that, rather than take the box from him by force while he was adjusting himself (which procedure inevitably reduces a child to the class of animals or criminals, and why, indeed, should we, simply because we are the stronger, compel a child to do as we say?) we would wait till he was old enough to understand the consequences of his actions, and desist on a perfectly reasonable basis.

"In the course of a few minutes, however, the child's clothes were observed to be in flames; it was necessary to extinguish them, after he had been slightly burned in order to impress upon him the natural results of carelessness in this direction, and by the time this had been satisfactorily accomplished, the room was on fire beyond control. On account of our lingering to point out to him the practical disadvantages of his actions, the blaze extended too widely for the fire company's efforts, and the house burned to the ground. We are now living in rooms across the street, so that when he is able to realize perfectly what he has done, the blackened ruins will impress upon his

mind, without any degrading corporal punishment, the consequences of disobedience."

"Tom Wilbour, you are really too bad! How can you write about such a dreadful thing, anyway?" Aunt Emma complained. "I'm surprised that you can laugh at it, Susy."

"I'm not laughing at *it*, Aunt Emma," Susy explained, "I'm laughing at the funny way Tommy reads it—and then, you must admit, Aunt Emma, it sounds just like that book, only sillier of course. Except for that, you could hardly tell."

"Except for that!" Tom cried bitterly. "Only sillier! That shows what you really know about the book your old club is swearing by! As if I could write anything sillier if I lay awake nights! Listen to this," and he deftly drew from under the cushion of the Morris chair the book Aunt Emma had fondly hoped to sequestrate there. At her involuntary gasp of surprise he smiled triumphantly, but made no further comment on her failure to conceal the object of his satire.

"*I had a little trouble to teach him not to touch things in the dining-room, and for a time we seriously considered placing things out of his reach, but eventually concluded it would be better to stand some loss of valued articles, if necessary, than lose an opportunity of showing him in every direction*

of his life that he must learn to respect the rights of others. The servants and I, therefore, kept following him up, saying, 'No, no!' whenever he touched anything, and offered some pleasant diversion each time as the next thing for him to do when we led him away. It was really very amusing.

"There! do you hear that? I can tell you one thing, ladies, a few weeks of that sort of thing and you would 'eventually stand the loss of one valued article'—the mind of Thomas R. Wilbour! You would be obliged to seek him in his padded cell. 'It was really very amusing'—good heavens! If that represents amusement to any human soul, what must its sorrows be? I ask you that!"

"Well," remarked Susy the practical, "you needn't bother, Tommy, because nobody's going to ask you to walk around after Binks; he doesn't pick up things yet."

And indeed Martin Brinkerhoff seemed little likely to require the services of any such rearguard; at present he wanted but little here below and wanted that little on the floor. He was not aspiring, and clearly reasoned that the baby that was down need fear no fall, for he kept his ear to the ground, to use his father's phrase, and lay placidly for hours on his striped afghan, regard-

ing such objects as naturally fell within his range of vision.

On such occasions, except for the traditional necessity of a nurse, he might safely have been trusted to the care of one of the wax ladies in the shop windows, as his father declared, for he never rolled off the confines of the afghan, and lifted his voice only at rare intervals and in the most legitimate interests. It was, in fact, a matter of definite grievance to Belle that the only situations in which her personality *per se* appeared necessary to her charge were those in which, as a self-appointed rescuer, she bore him from the scenes of Aunt Emma's psychological research at his expense. On her days of absence her place, so far as the object of her care was concerned, seemed equally well filled by the cook or the maid. Not that solitude appealed to Martin, however. Far from preferring to roll in loneliness, he considered, evidently, that it was utterly beneath his dignity to do so, for if deserted for a moment he was accustomed to leave the afghan and start on a tottering expedition across the room, with the very apparent intention of capturing the careless person who had so far forgotten the etiquette of the situation as to leave him unattended. To meet his views properly, some one must occupy that low red chair.

In some subtle way he made perfectly clear to his relatives both his personal indifference as to the identity of the servitor and his insistence on chaperonage in the abstract; so that while no one was allowed to flatter herself on the ground of any preference for her society, every one was deeply impressed with the necessity of strict and continuous attendance on the striped afghan.

This result delighted Mr. Wilbour beyond words.

"You see, he knows," he explained, "that boy knows. Will he have to grow gray over the etiquette columns? Will he have to ask the ladies' magazines which fork? Will he be sending stamped and addressed envelopes to get early information as to home weddings, and who pays the clergyman? Not much. I'll bet you he knows now that the groom wears pearl-gray trousers and a black frock-coat, and that a simple breakfast consists of sandwiches, salads, and ices."

"Tommy, you are the very silliest man I ever saw!"

"Not at all. He is probably a duke in disguise, that child—all servants look alike to him! Some day he will probably be found by Belle kissing the Sears baby behind the sofa, and ten to one, when taxed with it, he'll say, '*Ce n'est qu'un valet!*' That's the kind he is—*noblesse oblige!*"

"'SOME DAY HE WILL PROBABLY BE FOUND BY BELLE KISSING THE SEARS BABY BEHIND THE SOFA'"

"If you say all the French you know to-day, Tommy, you won't have any left for the summer," his wife observed neatly, "and as for Binks's kissing Dot Sears, I hope he won't pick out such a little prig as that child's getting to be! Besides, Minnie doesn't let her kiss anybody. If people start to, she says, 'Please kiss my cheek, if you don't mind!' It's germs," she added scornfully.

"Ah," her husband commented, "it's certainly hard on Dorothy. But you must remember, Toots, that the girl is young yet. You know you used to say you weren't fond of—"

"Tom!"

"And you didn't see why people should want to, but you—"

"Tommy Wilbour, that's enough!"

"—learned," Mr. Wilbour concluded calmly, "and maybe Dorothy will, in spite of her mother's prejudices. All I have to say is, if kissing invites germs, a large proportion of us are gratifyingly germ-proof! For instance, you and I—"

"Here comes Aunt Emma, Tom. Sit down. What did you say, Aunt Emma?"

"I was wondering if Martin doesn't really care for Belle at all, Susy? It seems so strange. Here she's been gone two days, and he doesn't seem to miss her the least bit. And Maggie doesn't pretend to be specially fond of children,

either, though she's perfectly conscientious about helping with him. Everybody in the club says just the opposite in all their reports — all the children love their nurses so. Mrs. Upton asked me this week if I thought Martin was likely to develop emotionally at all! Think of that! I felt dreadfully, but what could I say?"

"Why, Aunt Emma Wilbour, the idea!" Susy grew red with indignation, while Tom shook with silent laughter. "How impertinent of her! How unbearable! What business is it of hers, anyway? He isn't her baby, is he? I consider it extremely—"

"My dear Toots, you are hopelessly behind the times! This is science, and science cannot be impertinent. It looks a little prying, to be sure, but once you call it scientific you can talk about a lot of things, my dear, that we didn't use to mention. Isn't that so, Aunt Em?"

"It does seem so, Tom," the good lady admitted seriously. "Now, young Mrs. Meade told some of her—er—most sacred thoughts, before she—before her—and . . . Well, I must say I thought it was odd. If I had thought such things, I should have kept them to myself, I think."

"What things, Aunt Emma? Do tell us," her nephew begged, an unholy curiosity in his eye.

"I'll never breathe a word, I swear! I used to know Flossie Meade pretty well when she was F. Alison Saunders, and I'd love to know—"

"Be still, Tom. Of course I sha'n't tell you."

"But why not? I'm making a book! It's all right to tell me. People tell Tolstoy everything, and he puts it in a book. Why won't you tell me? I might be as great as Tolstoy if people would come and tell me things! What were Flossie's er—thoughts?"

"Be still, Tom. You see, Susy, that boy in the book—I believe he is supposed to be normal—"

"Oh, you do—? you do? Well, here's where we differ, Aunt Emma, once and forever. Any child that tolerates Handel, though with a quiver of the lip, at four months, is out of any class directly. He trots by himself, if you want my views."

"As I was saying, Susy, that child felt so sensitive to servants. He seems to have been as unusual in one direction as Martin is in the other."

"Thank heaven!" Martin's father interpolated hastily. "Anything that separates Binks from that kid is so much to the good! And Binks is safe to do it, too. Just mention something that poor martyr to science patronizes, and you'll find my thoughtful son investing in the opposition stock!"

"Here is what I mean," and Miss Wilbour produced the club's text-book and found a turned-down leaf:

"*A curious thing about the child shows clearly all through the record, that he knew instantly, when meeting persons, whether they liked him or not. Servants could not be kept with comfort to the little fellow when he had shown that he thought they didn't like him, and it was always found advisable, when engaging a servant in any capacity, to first have him see the person, and watch his manner before engaging them. In this way some exceptionally faithful servants were secured.*"

"The deuce they were! Kind of a little intelligence bureau, wasn't he?" Mr. Wilbour shook his head disconsolately. "My country! And that's what you want my son and heir to be, Aunt Emma? Go to! I'll show you."

And the next edition of the *Nursery Sleuth-Hound* was not long in appearing.

"*May first.*—Martin has again exercised his extraordinary instinct for detecting dislike in the servants. The cook put strychnine in his broth last week and endeavored to spank him with a large wooden spoon, since when he has taken a violent aversion to her, and refuses to be reasoned with on the subject. He evidently thinks she dislikes him, though why, we cannot imagine. Yester-

"'AND IT WAS ALWAYS FOUND ADVISABLE, WHEN ENGAGING A SERVANT IN ANY CAPACITY, TO FIRST HAVE HIM SEE THE PERSON'"

day his nurse omitted to put any cold water in his bath-tub, and as the water was nearly boiling he was inconvenienced. Since then he has objected to her bathing him, though we have tried to convince him that it was probably accidental.

"*May fourth.*—It has been necessary to get a new butler. Martin's success with the last footman was so marked that we have trusted this matter entirely to him. Personally we favored the third applicant, an intelligent Irishman, but his references must have been unsatisfactory, as in the ultimate issue he was sent away. We think Martin would have engaged the fifth, an apparently capable Swede, but he was engaged with his bottle at the time of the interview, and happening to lose it during his inspection of the man, he grew a little pettish and screamed loudly. The man, remarking impudently that he was no nurse, objected to picking up the bottle, and that of course prejudiced the boy against him. It is quite wonderful how the little fellow detects incapacity. It seems practically impossible to deceive him. The neighbors are anxious to syndicate him and establish a local branch of the central intelligence office, but we have decided that such a proceeding would probably force his mental growth too rapidly, and the effort has been to keep him in every way normal and evenly

developed, restraining, if necessary, rather than urging."

On the conclusion of this entry, Mr. Wilbour drew a long, satisfied breath.

"There, how's that?" he inquired proudly.

"'YESTERDAY HIS NURSE OMITTED TO PUT ANY COLD WATER IN HIS BATH-TUB'"

"But—but part of that's in the book, isn't it, Tommy?" his wife asked doubtfully.

"You may well think so, Toots," he returned

with gravity. "I have caught the spirit so perfectly that any one might well be pardoned—"

"I don't know but that's so!" Aunt Emma suddenly interrupted with decision, to her nephew's incredulous glee. "If anybody as flighty as you, Tom Wilbour, can write a thing like that, and make it sound so—so—"

"Reasonable?" he suggested helpfully.

"No!"

"Idiotic?" he ventured.

"Oh, go away!"

She stared at him confusedly, more than one emotion struggling in her face.

"But some of those things *are* scientific!" she cried obstinately, "they are!"

"Of course they are," he assured her delightedly, "and so am I! It's a scientific age, Aunt Emma. And I'm out for science every day and all the time! *Now* will you tell me Flossie's er—thoughts?"

VII

WHICH DEALS WITH SPONTANEOUS EJACULATIONS

"MARTIN, say 'papa'? Come, be a good baby and say 'papa'! Will he? Please, baby! Pa-pa-pa! Please? *Please!*"

Susy's lips pursed deliciously, her eyes, round and brown, fastened hypnotically on her son's, her hands clasped in his small and uncertain lap. One would have thought a table or a chair must burst into speech at such a charming appeal, but flesh and blood remained obstinately mute.

"Oh, Martin dear, why don't you talk? Aren't you going to, ever? Watch me, now, and do it, please, Binks! Pa-pa-pa! It's so easy to say!"

Martin smiled wisely, and sucked in his moist, pink lips. Susy caught her breath. Would he? She grasped his fat little legs nervously and shook

him gently, as if to precipitate the impending crisis.

Slowly his cheeks filled and filled before her; his eyes began to disappear, his nose became a speck. It was as if the pent-up speech within him must surely burst out in a flood of oratory, so pretentious were the preparations. In sympathy with these facial contortions his anxious mother's countenance assumed an expression so similar as to cause her husband to experience a little alarm.

"Hurry it up, Toots, hurry it up!" he besought her. "If it must happen, let us hear it now! You don't know how queer you look, really. Why don't you slap each other's backs?"

And still the two confronted each other, Martin swelling visibly with each second, Susy unconsciously imitating him. Mr. Wilbour stared at them, fascinated.

"It can't last long," he murmured. "Hold steady! There!"

For a sort of internal grunt from his son announced the approaching climax; his mouth took on every semblance of the letter *p*. His father's lips instinctively shaped themselves to that explosive consonant, and for one last second the three sat spellbound, pouting into space.

Then as Susy enthusiastically chirped out her

model cry and even Mr. Wilbour apologetically muttered "pa-pa," Martin slowly and noiselessly projected from his bunched and rosy mouth a small but unmistakable bubble. It grew and grew with all the effect of some uncanny conjurer's trick: it seemed impossible that from such a tiny source such a sphere should rise. Even as he blew it, he rolled his eyes from one of his parents to the other, as if to command their utmost attention and appreciation, and when at the supreme moment it collapsed softly, and his cheeks assumed their normal proportions, he met their disappointed sighs with a reassuring smile, that said more plainly than words, "There, how many children of my age could have done that?"

For a moment the ruse succeeded: they experienced a certain foolish pride in this idiotic achievement; but Mr. Wilbour recovered immediately and addressed his son severely.

"All right, Binks, all right! If that's the best you can do, say no more. Only, if you think this soap-bubble act is going to take the place of the ordinary drawing-room patter, you're doomed to a terrible awakening! People aren't accustomed to it, my dear boy, and they won't stand it. I tell you that, straight! It may hold the attention through its undeniable novelty, for a little, but it won't do—it won't do!"

Susy kissed his fat, creased hands despairingly.

"Oh, Martin, how could you?" she upbraided him. "And I thought you were really going to, this time! Here you are fifteen months old—no, you're fifteen and three weeks — and you don't talk any more than as if you were fifteen weeks!"

"Or fifteen minutes," Tom answered gloomily.

Susy turned on him instantly. "Why, Tom Wilbour, you ought to be ashamed! You, yourself, never said a word till you were two—not one! Aunt Emma often says so. And they all thought it was dreadful, too."

"Well and good," Mr. Wilbour responded tranquilly, "but I never mistook myself for a bubble-party, anyhow! I never got everybody wrought up to nervous prostration and then insulted 'em like that. And when I *did* speak—!"

His tone implied enormous possibilities. Mrs. Wilbour sniffed.

"Oh yes, Tommy, we all know how grand it was when you *did* speak! We know what you said, too. It was—"

"It's not necessary, my dear girl, to go into details; suffice it to say, as they say in novels, that I spoke."

"Aunt Emma, what was it that Tommy said when he first spoke?" Susy pursued relentlessly, as Miss Wilbour passed the door.

"Why, he said 'choo-choo,' my dear, and after that, 'Na-na'—that was for me—and then—"

"Dear me, Aunt Emma, can't I get you a chair or a book or—or something?" her nephew interrupted hastily.

"Why, no, thank you, Tom, I'm just on my way to the kitchen. After that he said 'Moppy'—that was for Aunt Martha—and then I'm not quite sure—"

"Oh, that's all right, Aunt Em; you needn't bother. As I say, Toots, when a boy gets you all strung up so that you expect him to spout, 'Live or die, sink or swim, survive or perish, I give my heart and my hand to this vote!' and then he blows a silly bubble and quits, you naturally feel—"

"You naturally feel that he ought to say 'Moppy'!"

Mrs. Wilbour rarely essayed satire, but its very rarity lent it a distinct force, and her husband wilted under it.

"Not at all, not at all," he returned feebly, "nothing of the sort. I don't believe I said it, anyway. I—"

"Oh, you don't? Well, I do. You won't hear Binks saying anything like that. When he does talk—"

"He will lisp in numbers, without any doubt,"

his father assented eagerly. "My dear, I am sure of it. Probably even now he has the thing all planned, and it will pour out in one triumphant burst. And, anyhow, they oughtn't to talk too soon, ought they?"

"No, indeed," Susy returned, appeased. "Don't you know,

> "*If you talk before you go*
> *Your tongue will be your overthrow*"?

"Is that so?" Mr. Wilbour inquired genially. "Well, in that case we're sure of one thing: Binks will never be overthrown that way, will he? And that's a mighty good thing, too. I say, Tootie, William Sears must have talked terrible soon, mustn't he?"

"Hush, Tommy; Will is all right, only—"

"Yes, that's just it—'only.' He was telling us about Dot to-day, and that fool thing she said about her prayer-book. It makes me tired—a child four years old!"

"Well, but, Tommy, you must admit it was funny. She was so calm about it. I heard her myself, you know—it was to Mrs. Upton she said it. She opened it at the title-page and handed it to Mrs. Upton, and remarked in the most matter-of-fact way, 'This is a very excellent picture of Jesus, Mrs. Upton!' Any one would have thought

she had seen half a dozen proofs! You'd have had to laugh, Tom."

"Oh, well, but you do get tired of the best story in the world when Will Sears tells it, Toots."

"'THIS IS A VERY EXCELLENT PICTURE, MRS. UPTON'"

"You mean you do, Tommy."

"I mean any person of sense does. How in the world you could ever have seen anything in that—that—"

"Tommy!"

"Well, he is. More so than anybody I ever knew."

"Oh, I don't know. He used to be very interesting sometimes."

"O Lord!"

"Well, he did. Ask any of the girls. You know he has travelled a good deal—"

"Where? To the Holy Land and back, with that imbecile party."

"I don't see why they were imbecile."

"You don't? Why, they must have been, to take William Sears along!"

Regarding this subject as closed, Mr. Wilbour moved lightly to another.

"Why did you try to teach Binks to say 'papa' first?" he demanded. "I thought that was out of date. I thought they opened up nowadays with German poetry."

"Oh, you mean because Nathalie Upton happened to learn that kindergarten song from her brother. It's because *p* is easy to say, Tom."

"It doesn't seem to be so in the case of my son," his father observed. "If ever a child came within an inch of exploding with a loud report, he's it. If I were you, I'd try the rest of the alphabet first."

"You see," Susy continued seriously, "there

are two ways. They may begin with—with spontaneous ejaculations or—"

"For heaven's sake, Toots!"

"That's all right, that's just the word. Or else they may—"

"If it's like the first one, dearest, don't say it so quickly, and explain as you go—won't you?"

"Now, you've made me forget it, Tommy,—oh, you're mussing my hair!

"I can't think of the word," Susy resumed, after a pause, "but it means mewing like a cat, you know."

"Mewing like a— My country! Do you mean to say that they can get that way so soon? I thought you had to inherit it, and I'm sure—"

"Tommy, don't be dreadful!"

"But you're the dreadful one, Miss! It's enough to gray one's hair. It sounds like Edgar Allan Poe. You wake up in the night in an old, lonely mansion, and you feel feelings that you can't express, but they are more than curdling, and the water drips from the eaves, and you have a kind of—of—*murdered* sensation—"

"Tommy, don't!"

"—sensation, and there's a weight on your chest, and a sort of pattering noise begins, and, well, you know that It is coming, coming, coming!"

"Tommy Wilbour, stop this minute!"

"And then you know that you knew from the beginning that there was something strange about this house, and that the strangeness was in the soul of the man that died there in the sombre October, when all was dank and—and—dank—"

"You said dank before."

"That's all right—you wait. It comes nearer, nearer, nearer, and moans and weeps, but that is not the worst, for through the moaning you begin to hear a sound that pulls your hair upward with sheer terror, a sound that holds you stiff and stark to the bed, a sound that makes you realize that this is indeed the end; it is—it is—"

"Oh, *please*, Tommy!"

"It is," Mr. Wilbour continued relentlessly, "the Mewing of a Cat!

"Heavens! What cat? Alas, you know but too well! The cat that in the gloomy midnight, when she prayed in vain, helped you slay the soul—"

"Tom, I shall scream!"

"—of the Lady—"

"Aunt Emma! Aunt Emma!"

"What is the matter, Susy? Be quiet, you are frightening Martin!"

"Make him stop, Aunt Emma—he's tickling me— Ow! ow! Oh, Tom, please!"

"Tom," Aunt Emma commanded severely,

"stop this minute. I'm ashamed of you—you'll have her in hysterics. The idea!"

"That's all right—she pulled my hair. And my ears, too. Just because I was telling her a story about an old, lonely mansion—"

At this point Martin Brinkerhoff giggled reminiscently. It was a soft, polite giggle, but it expressed volumes, and the creator of the old, lonely mansion stopped abruptly.

"Good heavens! do you think he understood?" he inquired with deep concern.

"Of course he did, and he was disgusted—simply disgusted. He probably thinks you're crazy. If you could ever keep still long enough to listen to anybody else, Tommy, you'd find out lots of things you never knew at all."

"For instance?" Mr. Wilbour suggested politely.

"I didn't mean that Binks would necessarily *mew*, you see. Sometimes it's a rooster, or a dog, or—or anything they happen to hear, you know. You have to begin some way. And usually they imitate, I believe."

"Oh! Well, if he waits to hear a rooster, I fear he'll wait some time, my dear. I didn't notice many on Seventy-ninth Street to-day. However, that may have been my abstracted way. I get thinking of things—"

"Oh yes!"

Mrs. Wilbour's tone was distinctly unsympathetic.

"But better a rooster—even an imaginary one, dearest, than a cat. I'm glad he needn't mew. Somehow I have a horror of that sound. It makes me think of—"

"There, there, Tommy, you told what it made you think of. The question is, will he just make some kind of noise, or will he try to sound like something? Aunt Emma wants to know; don't you, Aunt Emma?"

"Why, yes, it would be interesting," Miss Wilbour returned, but without that enthusiasm that ordinarily characterized her researches into her grandnephew's development. It is probable that it had occurred to her that she was highly unlikely to assist, in her character of disinterested scientist, at Martin's conversational *début;* any sign of forthcoming speech was only too certain to be caught by the ever-ready Belle, who would at this point convey him most certainly to some one of her cherished coverts—notably the laundry—and there exercise him in the production of those exclamations, ejaculatory or imitative, which should occur to him as most expressive of his state of mind.

For Belle, alas, had no appreciation of the in-

estimable value to science of Aunt Emma's red book. Her idea of its baleful influence on her charge's destiny might readily be gained from the frequency and persistence of her abductions. How many of his earliest grunts and mutterings had been snatched from chronicling she only knew; through what psychological labyrinths his first conceptions struggled must remain, except for her explication, lost to the world.

"There, there, precious!" she would murmur, when a hasty glance into Aunt Emma's room convinced her that the red book was not in sight —"There, there; come with Belle. *She'll* take care of the lamb, yes, she will!"

And Martin, who now travelled with a considerable velocity, would pat along by her side, grasping her finger, apprehensively viewing the landscape o'er in order to escape lurking footstools or turned-over rug-corners. Once in safe retreat, he would settle himself on the cushion provided by the thoughtful companion of his flight, and divert himself with his recent favorite occupation of taking off and putting on his shoes and stockings.

With one fat forefinger he would poke button after button through its hole, religiously wetting his finger in his mouth between each operation, and having removed the shoes, he would peel

"MARTIN WOULD PAT ALONG BY HER SIDE"

each stocking from its stumpy little foot. As the last pink toe appeared he would utter a grunt of approval, and, having with some small difficulty counted the treasured members, forward and backward, for he was highly accurate, he would reverse the process as far as possible, and sometimes succeed in pulling on one stocking part way. At this juncture, Belle, who had learned to look up from her book instinctively at the proper point, would complete the operation, Martin's eyes following her with interest as she pressed each button back into place and fastened his diminutive stocking-supporters with a brisk snap.

"What precision! what despatch! An excellent nursemaid, indeed!" appeared to tremble on his lips, but he withheld any actual comment. After a moment spent in admiration of her handiwork, he would wet his fingers and push again at the top button of the left shoe, and, to quote the rules in the Arithmetic, proceed as before.

Belle, who shared her mistress's regret that their charge had not distinguished himself by an earlier and more pronounced grasp of the language, would often, on these occasions, try her hand at inducing him to commit himself, by ever so small a syllable, to his native tongue.

"Come on, Mister, and say 'ta-ta' when I give you your shoe!" she besought him, one morning.

"Come on, now! 'Ta-ta, Belle!' Say it! Say it! Here I know lots of little boys, and none of 'em don't act like that, not a bit. You give 'em a shoe, and what do they say? Tell me that!"

Martin evinced a polite curiosity as to the remarks of other and more loquacious infants, but appeared, for his own part, quite ignorant of their ordinary course under the circumstances in question.

"Well, I won't give you the other, then. No, shoe all gone. Bad Martin can't have his shoe. Not a bit. What does he say? Ta-ta? Will y' say it?"

The obvious idiocy of the two syllables had evidently been long apparent to the youth, but the added insult of suggesting that he should stoop to employ them with absolutely no cause, the object of his gratitude being at present purposely withdrawn, was too much for his endurance, and arising from his cushion, he stood upon one bare foot in an attitude so menacing as utterly to win the heart of any feminine spectator.

"Well, so he was! Sweet as honey, was he? Was he the smartest baby on the street, was he? Never mind; it don't matter, it don't make no difference if that Roseman family's baby *can* talk. I guess she's more'n nine months, no matter what they say! And I know they're Jews, too. I'll

bet they are. She's too fat, too, ain't she, Martin? Can't stand up, can she? I'll bet there's no pork goes into *that* house! No, indeed."

Martin regarded his foot pensively and shook his head slowly and emphatically from side to side, as if he saw too clearly the inevitable pneumonia that threatened his future years. Contrition seized his nurse.

"Bless his heart! was he catchin' his death o' danger? Well, here's his shoe. Put it on, baby, or you'll sneeze in a minute. But say 'Ta-ta'! Say, 'Ta-ta, Belle!' Hurry up, now!"

Martin gave a pathetic sniff; it was as if that fatal fiend the grippe had already marked him for its own.

"Here, here! None o' that, now! Here's your shoe! Let me put it on, quick. Don't you dare to sneeze! If Miss Emma heard you sneeze, Mister, I know who'd get it!"

A malicious grin wrinkled the corners of the baby's mouth.

"I know too, my poor girl, and it wouldn't be me!" he very nearly rejoined.

"Oh, you young rascal! They'll have to get up early if they want to beat you! Do you see him cock his head at me? But never a word!"

It was Aunt Emma who almost inveigled him into speech. It appeared that the supporters of

the spontaneous-ejaculation theory banked heavily on the suggestive and picturesque expression of the idea of absence, negation, separation, impossibility, etc. The normal infant, one gathered from a detailed consideration of this theory, combined in one sweeping, masterful epithet the very marrow, the essential quality, of all these ideas, and applied it indiscriminately to the loss of his bottle, the departure of summer, the absence of an elevator in his apartment, or the failure of the Democratic party. Out of 7369 selected subjects, 6541 had first indicated their connection with the speaking public by means of some such pregnant word, and it was Aunt Emma's intention to tempt her grandnephew into conversational indiscretion by means of an artificially induced situation.

Having set her trap with a treasured red ball, a dilapidated rubber cow, a silver soup-ladle high in present favor, his pet cushion, and his wondering parents, this devotee of science began to withdraw the various objects of interest, one by one.

Grasping the red ball elaborately, she pranced out of the room with it, remarking in her flight,

"All gone, Martin, all gone!"

The rubber cow was next escorted from the room, tail foremost, and deposited in the hall.

"All gone, baby! Cow gone away!"

Martin eyed the cow's disappearing and dented nose with rising interest. As the soup-ladle was trailed temptingly through the door he made an involuntary movement, and squirmed to his feet as the cushion went the way of all his diversions.

"AND SQUIRMED TO HIS FEET"

"Mamma going now! (Come, Susy, let me push you out!) See, Martin, all gone!"

And Susy, bewildered but docile, was propelled into the all-devouring hall. Martin's eyes grew round, his chin quivered. Would nothing be left him? Tom remained obstinately on the sofa, eying his son with interest.

"Don't you let them fool you, old man; they're all out there behind the door," he declared reassuringly. "And don't you speak till you're good and ready, either!"

"Come on, now, Tom, and go out slowly! See, baby, papa's all gone! Martin all alone! All gone? O-o-o-h, *too* bad, all gone!"

Aunt Emma crooned out this desolating phrase in a manner to convince the most self-satisfied infant of absolute and final desertion. Nor was her tone lost on the object of all this pantomime. It was only too evident to him that there would be little left in the room but the walls and the floor if this devastating hand were not by some means stayed. His eyes wandered to the dining-table—would the inexplicable woman take that, too?

"It's up to you, Binks!" his father observed, his head in the doorway. "Say it quick, if you're going to! The hall's full. We're all gone — indeed we are! Quite, quite gone, as William puts it."

The head disappeared. There was a silence in the room. Aunt Emma, herself withdrawn now, watched through a crack in the door, one hand on the knob. Suddenly the hand trembled, for Martin, his eyes fixed on the door, began to coo and hum reminiscently; his tones mimicked her late

inflection perfectly. It was only a premonitory chanting, a soft, indistinct murmur, but surely the precursor of impending speech! Instinctively her own lips formed the syllables of her late *motif*, while to her joy, Martin's own lips opened, he breathed a soft vowel — was it "A-a-*aw*"? Still wider his lips parted, he set his jaw.

"G-g-guh-guh—" Aunt Emma's excited grasp shook the door-knob; it rattled slightly. Martin's glance wandered to the crack; it seemed to Aunt Emma that he looked her in the eye.

Then an inscrutable smile drew up the corners of his lips, his lids drooped. He sank gently on the floor, and yawning, laid his head upon his outstretched arm.

"She almost caught me, but not quite, thank heaven!" it is probable that he whispered, as he composed himself in an elaborately sleepy attitude, and when they came back softly after two minutes of patient silence, only a tiny snore greeted them from the middle of the carpet.

"The spontaneous-ejaculation man is wrong, Aunt Emma," Tom whispered as Susy bent adoringly over the triumphant Machiavelli, "he is imitating—a little pig!"

VIII

WHICH DEALS WITH THE MYSTERY OF SPEECH

TIME, as the books used to say, rolled on, and increased the stature of Martin Brinkerhoff Wilbour, and darkened his hair, and strengthened his legs, but did not unloose his tongue. It was fondly hoped by his relatives that the occasion of his second birthday, with its attendant celebrations, might excite him to a few words of appreciation, but though he looked volumes—encyclopædias, to quote his father—and nodded his head energetically at the proper points, to say nothing of frowning expressively when circumstances forced him to disagree with any of the guests' remarks, the discreet silence of his earlier life remained unbroken.

"It's useless to pretend that he doesn't understand, Tom, for he does," Aunt Emma declared emphatically. "You ought to have seen him

when the doctor came to see Belle and was telling Susy about her in the nursery. When he said to keep her quiet for a day or two and she'd be all right—that there wasn't any need for our worrying—Martin was watching him closely all the time, and he looked just as relieved when he said that. You can't imagine. We all noticed it."

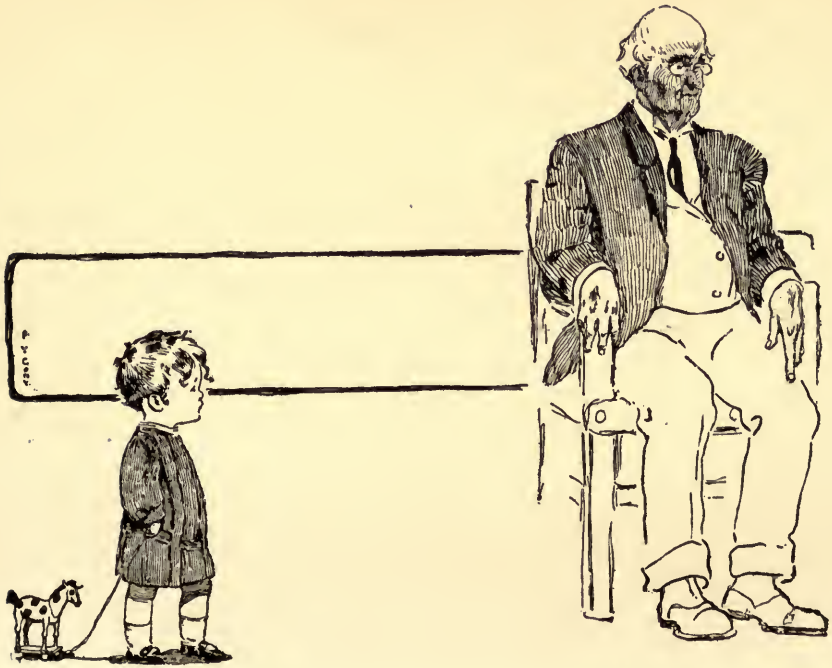
"Do I doubt it for an instant, Aunt Emma? Haven't I seen him argue for minutes together without opening his mouth? It's not that I think him brainless—be calm, Toots—but I'm afraid of him. Why shouldn't he talk? I talk, you talk, Belle talks, Norah talks, we all talk—why doesn't he?"

"He could if he chose," Susy insisted, obstinately.

"All the worse, all the worse, my dear girl. When people can talk and won't, what is behind it? They have their reasons, doubtless, but what are those reasons? Do you know them? Do I? No; if we did we should tell. Our natures are open, frank, sympathetic. Concealment is foreign to us. That is," Mr. Wilbour interrupted himself, "it is to *me*."

Meeting with no response from his audience but a slight sniff, he continued:

"Not that I would force any confidence that would be improper for me to hear. Not for a



"'MARTIN WAS WATCHING HIM CLOSELY ALL THE TIME'"

moment. I recognize that Binks has a right to his own secrets. I am not one of those unreasonable parents who think that because a certain person happens to be their child they have the right necessarily to control every thought of that person's mind. No indeed. I respect his individuality, I hope, as much as—as any of the ladies that ever wrote books about it could wish, but at the same time I am hurt—hurt and disappointed."

"Why, Tom, what do you mean?"

Susy's eyes were fastened on her husband's serious face; she was obviously uncertain as to his earnestness.

"What do I mean? Why, simply this. If Binks had taken me aside at any time and said, 'My dear father, owing to reasons which I'm not at liberty to give, I shall not be able to communicate with you verbally for some time—for an indefinite period, in fact,' should I have resented it? No. I should have said immediately, 'Why, that's all right, old fellow: don't mention it, I'm sure. Don't talk till you feel you can do so with perfect propriety.'"

"But, Tommy, he couldn't say all that!"

"No?" Mr. Wilbour rejoined. "Well, perhaps not. But a hint, a few words, would have sufficed. I hope I have a little tact, my dear."

"I hope you have a little sense," Aunt Emma retorted severely, "though sometimes I doubt it. I should think, Susy, you would be used to Tom Wilbour by this time. You listen to him as though what he said was worth a row of pins."

Susy might have replied with some pertinence that for at least one-half of her nephew's discourse Aunt Emma's attention had been as fixed as his wife's, but she did not. Nor did she suggest that in proportion to the length of that lady's acquaintance with Mr. Wilbour she exhibited a far greater degree of credulity than any other member of his household. She only smiled absently, with a worried look at her son, who, in the temporary absence of Belle, was playing with the soup-ladle under the direction of the entire family. Having failed in the attempt, which had lasted through the morning, to put the bowl into his mouth, at the same time holding the handle firmly between his knees, he was devoting the afternoon to an equally unsuccessful endeavor to sit in it. Occasional disgusted grunts chronicled his successive disappointments, but his general attitude was one of control, though it carried a definite implication of fighting it out on this line if it took all summer.

His guardians watched him for a few moments in silence, and only the clink and ring of the elu-

sive ladle as it slid from under the impending bulk of its young master and echoed on the floor, accompanied by the thud of his soft body, broke the stillness.

"Heavens! how nervous I am! I simply cannot watch that child another minute!" Aunt Emma exclaimed, and left the room abruptly.

"THE ELUSIVE LADLE SLID FROM UNDER THE IMPENDING BULK"

"Wouldn't you think he'd swear, though?" Mr. Wilbour queried, as Binks fell over the handle and knocked his ear on the bowl.

"I'd rather he would—if he'd only talk!" Susy

declared recklessly. Her husband regarded her with admiring surprise.

"Would you, now?" he remarked. "Dear me!"

Again there was a silence, and the light drizzling rain that hit the nursery window was for a while the only sound, for Martin had fallen asleep on the floor with the ladle clasped to his breast.

At last Tom spoke, low, on Martin's account, and confusedly, because of a discontented yawn that thickened his speech.

"I thank the Lord there's only one Memorial Day in the course of the year."

"Decoration Day, I call it," his wife suggested in a superior tone.

"That's a provincialism, and a childish one at that. The inhabitants of New England, among whom I am proud to—"

"Oh yes, the breaking waves dashed high. I know all about that," Mrs. Wilbour interrupted irreverently. "Anybody would think that Massachusetts was the one place where you could learn that—or anything else!"

"It is undoubtedly the best place," Mr. Wilbour replied politely, "though I should not like to say—"

"Oh, get along, Tommy! I should think not! Decoration Day has some sense: that's what they do—decorate."

"Don't tell *me* what they do," her husband returned snappishly, yet with a careful suppression of voice and a glance at the sleeping Binks, "I know too well! What have I been doing all the morning? They, indeed! You might as well say me, for nobody has decorated more to the square inch than I have. Those infernal snowballs! It makes me sick to think of them! Ugh!"

Susy's face grew involuntarily more sympathetic.

"Was it very bad this time?" she inquired.

"Bad? It was worse than ever. It makes me nervously prostrated for the day. It would be one thing if I ever knew any of 'em from Adam."

"You knew Uncle William Wyman," Susy reminded him perversely.

"Uncle William Wyman!" He exploded in a snort of rage that threatened the slumber of his son, who turned uneasily in the midst of happy dreams of an abject and conquered soup-ladle. "Yes, I did know Uncle William Wyman, and for how long? For exactly two years, when I was fifteen years old! Besides being the most narrow-minded man in the town, and making me pass the plate when I had new boots that squeaked all over the church—"

"Hush! you'll wake Martin up!"

"Very well, then, don't mention Uncle William

Wyman's name to me! Slapping down snowballs on his grave, indeed! I think Aunt Em is perfectly morbid — it upsets her, too. Of all idiotic holidays!"

Mr. Wilbour thrust his hands deep into his pockets and sprawled moodily in his chair. It had been a hard day for him.

Aunt Emma was not sentimental, but she was as devoutly given to the yearly adornment of the many graves of her family connection as if they occupied any appreciable part of her thoughts during the intermediate time. It had been her custom, for the ten years of her life in New York, to arise early on the morning of the 30th of May, and proceed up-town, reluctantly accompanied by her nephew, bearing baskets of the snowballs so distasteful to him, and secure in the consciousness of dozens more of that obvious and solid blossom waiting at the florist's near the great cemetery. "Miss Wilbour's snowballs" were as regular a part of that gentleman's income as his weekly church orders, and he invariably spared her one of his little sons to stagger under the two great basketfuls that he had reserved for her. He was never without a young son of the proper age, and Tom had been known to hazard a bet that he raised them for this express purpose.

As a further concession to the solemnity of the

"IT HAD BEEN A HARD DAY FOR HIM"

day, Aunt Emma attired herself in unwonted black, even to her gloves, and whistling or light conversation on the way was distinctly felt to be out of keeping with the occasion. It so happened that with the exception of one sister, who had been much older than she and whom she had hardly known, none of the relatives buried at Woodlawn were closely connected with Miss Wilbour, uncles, cousins, and an almost mythical personage referred to by Tom as my half-step-aunt, comprising the tale; but there were at least eight of these, besides Tom's godmother, whom he had never seen, and the betrothed of one of the uncles, who was supposed to have had a most romantic history, complicated with a vow on somebody's part to put flowers on her grave once a year.

One would have supposed Aunt Emma to be the last person likely to assume such a responsibility, but it was nevertheless her hand that arranged the inevitable snowballs beneath the young woman's tombstone, and her resigned if somewhat vague account of the heroine that was destined to go down to posterity.

Why the snowball should appeal to Aunt Emma as the one and only floral offering suited to these mortuary purposes her nephew never learned, but its association with the tomb was definitely

fixed in his mind, and he loathed it above all the products of nature. It was curiously connected, too, with his married life. His first lovers' quar-

"'MISS WILBOUR'S SNOWBALLS'"

rel with Susy had occurred on the 29th of May, and with his own hands he had given to the messenger-boy the enormous box of supposed roses

that proved later to be the first instalment of Aunt Emma's yearly tribal sacrifice. Sick with horror, for to him any faintest connection with the hated blossom was actually fatal to life, to say nothing of the insult of offering them as a propitiatory gift to his offended mistress, Tom had rushed to her house with the roses scorned by Aunt Emma, and endured agonies of mortification at the hands of her sister, who had never ceased to comment on the originality of his taste in that direction.

Well did he remember the occasion of the anniversary two years ago. Martin was four months old at that time, and had been forced to go without his supper, as Tom had so worked up Susy's sense of humor by his dramatic recital of the cortège of the morning that she had threatened a real hysteria, and the nurse had sternly forbidden her to assist at the approaching supper-party—which was hard on the principal guest. Aunt Emma's righteous wrath on this occasion and the nurse's ill-concealed disgust had hurt his feelings very much.

The following year he had been observed, to his undying wrath and shame, by one of the most important clients of his firm, who, while on a tour of inspection through the grounds, apparently, had caught sight of the young counsel heaping snow-

balls upon his half-step-aunt's grave, and had unwarrantedly decided that he was mourning over the tomb of his wife. Being a kindly man and having been much pleased with Mr. Wilbour's manners and appearance in the office, where he held the position of junior partner, this client had walked softly to where the bereaved one knelt, and waited reverently. As he rose to his feet after having covered the mound neatly with the puffy white balls (Aunt Emma was very particular that there should be no bare spots), the astonished young man felt a gentle pat upon the shoulder and heard a subdued murmur implying that the speaker had shared precisely this sad experience. Filled as he was with deep self-pity, the sympathy was sweet to Mr. Wilbour, and for a few uncomprehending seconds he had accepted it silently; then as it dawned on him that the mathematical probabilities of a half-step-aunt and the consequent snowballs were, in the distinguished client's case, very slight, he had demanded an explanation. The distinguished client had mentioned softly the breaking of the closest possible tie; Tom had scornfully repudiated his vague relative in this connection. The client, surprised but obstinately unenlightened, referred definitely to his own wife, "though not so young as yours, Mr. Wilbour."

At which the disgusted Thomas, with a snort of rage, had burst forth,

"Great Scott! It's my half-step-aunt, and I never saw her in my life, and I don't want to, either!"

At this they had parted abruptly, the client divided between incredulity and displeasure, Tom resignedly convinced that he had estranged forever one of the props of the firm, and correspondingly grateful to his half-step-aunt.

Recollection of these successively unlucky anniversaries did not add to the victim's cheerfulness on the present occasion, and as the atmosphere of impersonal gloom which wrapped Aunt Emma extended inevitably to her niece, who reflected to a large extent the state of mind of those about her, the house of Wilbour was sinking slowly into a state of dark depression. Tom was in the frame of mind in which a woman snatches for her handkerchief and after a few preliminary gulps collapses into a comfortable fit of tears, to rise refreshed and magnanimous a little later; but Tom was a man, and possessed of no other recourse than to kick the floor nervously and think unsuitable thoughts. It occurred to him that in this crisis his wife was notably unhelpful: far from cheering him, she merely eyed the toe of her slipper morosely and scowled if his tappings and

twitchings seemed to threaten the repose of Martin, who had twisted himself into a particularly foolish attitude around the soup-ladle and slumbered somewhat audibly, with his mouth open.

"Oughtn't he to shut his mouth?" his father inquired disparagingly. "Won't he get something or other?"

"You sleep that way sometimes, and you don't seem to get anything," Susy returned, not without point but with a distinct lack of interest. If Mr. Wilbour had known that she was thinking him perilously near the point of getting too fat, and resenting bitterly the hideous tie he had selected in unconscious deference to the day, he would have felt even more aggrieved than he did.

"We should all breathe through the nose," he announced didactically, "everybody agrees upon that. You have only to watch the animals—"

"A dog breathes through its mouth when it's running," Susy observed impersonally.

Her husband frowned.

"I wasn't thinking of dogs," he said shortly, "I—"

"Oh, of course, if you take out all the animals!"

"A dog is not the only animal, Susy."

"No, but it is the most important one."

"I don't agree with you," began Mr. Wilbour crossly, "the horse— Oh, what nonsense!"

And again they lapsed into silence, broken only by the audible slumber of Binks.

Suddenly Tom realized a new source of discomfort, vague at first, but growing clearer with every second. What had been a low, indistinguishable crooning was developing into a mournful melody, and as he listened, words detached themselves from the tune:

"*Just* BREAK *the* NEWS *to* MOTHER,
And TELL *her* THAT *I* LOVE *'er*,
But TELL *her* NOT *to* LOOK *for me*,
For I *shall* NOT *come* HOME!"

It was the voice of Belle, who was solacing her convalescence with the cheerful variety of song peculiar to her temperament, and even as Mr. Wilbour began to speak, the tune returned upon itself and the refrain started again,

"*Just* BREAK *the* NEWS *to* MOTHER—"

"What in the d—deuce is the matter with that girl? It's enough to drive a man to drink! Why doesn't she sing something else?" he demanded furiously.

"She always sings that kind of song, you know very well," Mrs. Wilbour responded. "I don't believe she knows any other kind."

"It might just as well be Sunday! I couldn't feel any worse," he groaned. "And day after

to-morrow it *will* be Sunday! Two in a week. It's too much. Can't she be stopped?"

"I don't see how," Susy answered unsympathetically. "I can't exactly forbid the poor girl to amuse herself."

"Amuse herself? Amuse herself? Does that ghastly howling amuse her?"

"It must, or she wouldn't do it. Nobody urged her to sing, I suppose."

"No, I suppose not," he agreed bitterly. "Nobody in their senses. How long— Heavens! what's that?"

For a depressing alto at that moment added itself to the melody, and wandered at an unsteady distance below it. It was undoubtedly a human voice, but it occurred violently to Mr. Wilbour that no human creature capable of producing such a variety of sound could possibly have been permitted to exist within shooting distance of any fellow-man.

"Who—*what* is that?" he exploded.

"It is Norah, probably," Susy replied. "She said she would rather come up into Belle's room and sit with her than take her afternoon out. Which was very nice of her, of course."

"Oh, very," he muttered with his last shred of control, gritting his teeth fiercely.

"*For* I *shall* NOT *come ho-o-o-me!*"

moaned the duet, the soprano wailing like a lost soul, the alto recalling a fog-horn on a misty afternoon at sea.

"Oh, this is too much — I swear this is too much!" Tom strode across the room in desperation.

"What are you going to do?" Susy inquired warningly.

"Do? do? I'm going to stop that infernal noise!"

"Don't be absurd, Tom. If they want to sing, they must certainly be allowed to. It does no harm and it won't last long, probably. Belle doesn't feel well, and it would hurt her feelings very much if—"

"Well, I can tell her one thing, she'll never feel any better while she does that! She'll have a relapse. And I suppose my feelings are of no importance."

"That's a very different thing," said Mrs. Wilbour.

"All my life I have hated and despised alto!" Tom proclaimed. "From a boy it has affected me very strangely. That's why I hate Sunday. People will sing alto on Sunday that would never dream of singing it any other time. It's the beastliest thing in the world. It makes you want to die and get it over with. They used to have a

prayer-meeting in the house next to ours in Greenfield, and when they got singing things with alto in 'em I used to get so blue I nearly cried. And it's the same way now."

"Well, cry now, if you want to," Susy suggested coolly. "Why don't you?"

This was too much for Mr. Wilbour's self-control. In his irritable state of nerves he could bear no more, and sitting down forcibly in the nearest chair, he uttered an angry and unpardonable monosyllable.

I am informed that this little monosyllable is highly offensive to many if not all of my present readers, and so I will go no farther than to say that it begins with a letter not far from the front of the alphabet and is frequently encountered in real life—probably the best of reasons for eliminating it from fiction, which should rather seek to idealize the brutality of disgraceful facts than appear to encourage them with recognition.

The utterance of the monosyllable just mentioned appeared to relieve Mr. Wilbour's feelings to a degree, for on his wife's leaving the room with dignity, he repeated it, not once, but three distinct times, with great energy and clearness of articulation. Pausing in a hasty march across the room, his hair rumpled over his ears and his eyes narrowed with the force of his remarks, he con-

"HE CONFRONTED HIS SON"

fronted his son, who met his look with one so knowing that it was impossible to doubt his entire appreciation of the situation.

"Well," snapped his father, "what is it? Do you like that infernal alto? What have you got to say?"

Binks unscrewed the soup-ladle from his mouth, grasped it with both hands in the fashion of a golfer about to accomplish a tremendous drive, and smiling cheerfully at his father, repeated the monosyllable the gentleman had just employed.

Mr. Wilbour staggered back, his jaw dropping, the evidence of his senses in grave doubt. He would as soon have expected speech from the cat as from his son. As he stared wildly at the wielder of the ladle, that young person rose to his feet, and again manipulating his instrument in a manner calculated to send a ball half-way around the links, repeated the monosyllable. There could be no doubt — he said it, and he meant it.

It was a terrible moment. That the great mystery of human speech should have been revealed to Binks at a time and in a manner which admitted of no proud advertisement! He had spoken, indeed, but how? And at whose instigation? Mr. Wilbour actually groaned.

"Stop it! stop it!" he cried. "For heaven's sake, Binks, don't say that! What will they say? How did I know you'd—"

But Binks, who evidently felt that some nicety of inflection was yet to be gained, calmly repeated

"HE SAID IT, AND HE MEANT IT"

his last remark again with so accurate a mimicry of his father's tone that the unhappy man, divided between admiration and horror, could only gasp and glance fearfully towards the door.

At this point, Martin, fixing his eyes firmly

upon his parent and pounding the floor with the ladle at regular intervals, recited entirely without punctuation, but otherwise with masterly elocution, the following speech: "Bad kitty put 'er out Aunty Vail hot milk up-town!"

"Wh—what? Here, Susy, Aunt Emma, come here! Wh—what did you say, Binks?"

They rushed into the room, pale with fright, to see Tom squatting eagerly before the baby, beseeching him to repeat his recent address.

"He's been talking like a streak of lightning, I tell you! He talks as well as anybody! Say it again, won't you? It's something about hot milk—"

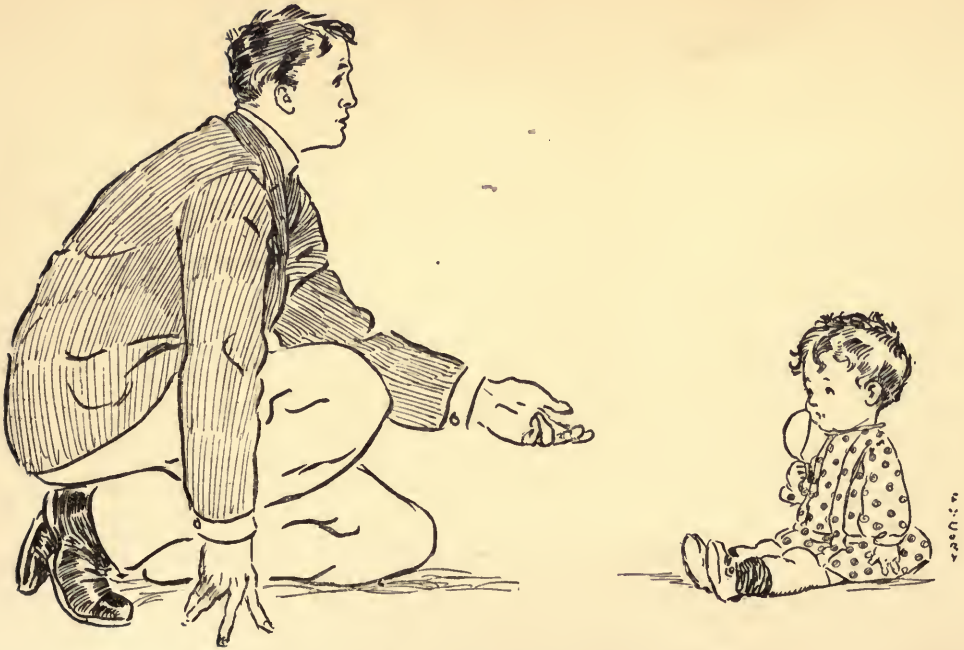
"Does he want hot milk?" Aunt Emma inquired excitedly. "Shall I get some?"

"Oh no, he doesn't want it: he just mentioned it—in passing," Tom returned, more at ease now and devoutly hoping that his son's second achievement had put the first out of his mind.

"What else did he say?" Susy demanded feverishly.

"He said something about Aunty Vail and the kitty— There, he's going to again!"

And indeed he began, with the automatic effect of a phonograph, a curious suggestion of having been filled with perforated rolls and wound up:



"BESEECHING HIM TO REPEAT HIS RECENT ADDRESS"

"Bad kitty put 'er out Aunty Vail hot milk up-town!"

The delighted women screamed and squealed with joy, Binks smiled in a superior manner, and Mr. Wilbour, feeling somehow responsible for the whole thing, watched them complacently.

"Was that just the way he said it before, Tom?" Aunt Emma asked eagerly.

"Just exactly."

"Was that all he said, every bit?" Susy added quickly.

"Heavens! wasn't that enough?" her husband equivocated.

"Then the first word, the very first word, he said, was 'bad,'" Aunt Emma announced.

"It certainly was," her nephew announced heartily, "it certainly was!"

And to his excited eyes it seemed that Martin winked gravely at him.

IX

WHICH DEALS WITH THE SOUL OF THE HOUSEHOLD

"THE Soul of the Household," declared an elaborately initialled motto suspended in a passe-partout border over the nursery mantel, "is the Prattle of the Child that Glorifies it."

If this were true (and as Tom observed, "if a motto isn't so, what is?") the soulfulness of the house of Wilbour bade fair to eclipse its every other characteristic. For the son and heir of the establishment prattled by day and night, by bed and board. The sound of his voice was as a running brook; his slowly ripening talent appeared to have flowered suddenly like the century-plant, in a single moment. But as it may be supposed that even the proud owners of that botanical wonder grow accustomed in time to its possession and cease to gather in the conservatory at the brief

ecstatic intervals of the first days, so the Wilbours found themselves in time inured to the once so marvellous observations of Martin Brinkerhoff. No longer now did a breathless audience hang upon his lips; it was with difficulty that he could distract even Belle's attention from her orange-colored novel.

"Yes, yes," she would murmur absently, "yes, I know. All right. Why don't you play with that china doggie there?"

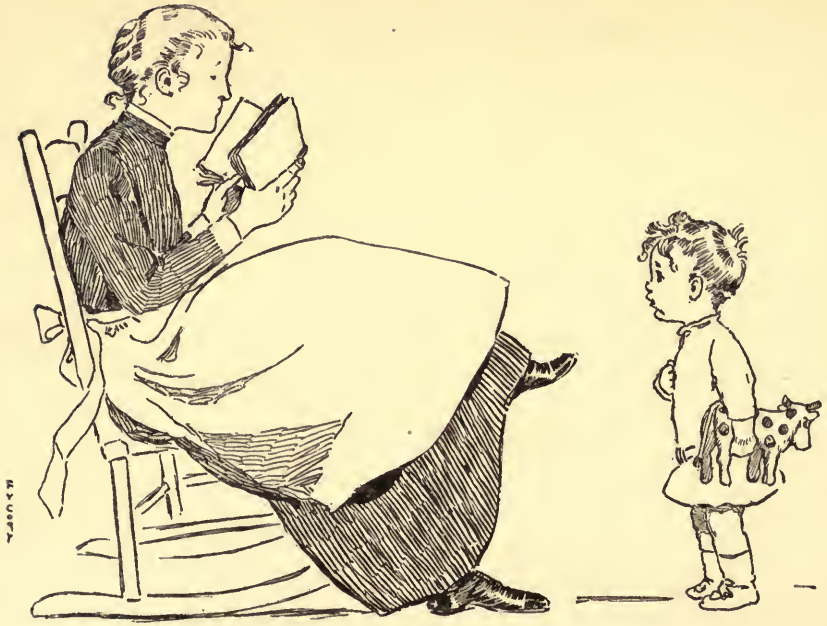
On such occasions poor Binks would nurse the spotted beast resentfully and begin to tell it an interminable tale:

"An' er aut'mobile met er shicken an' 'em went along, an' 'em went along, an' 'em went along, an' 'em played, an' 'em played, an' 'em played, an' a little pig went to market, an' a *bad* boy! An' er water came in, it did, an' er water it all came in, an' er murver hen was there an' 'em ate it *all* up, and a choo-choo an' a ring er bell an' a canny came an' a *bad* boy! An' 'em went along, an' 'em—"

"Oh, Binks, *don't* tell that all over again!"

Susy sat down on the floor and began to reason with him.

"You make me so nervous, Binks, and what you say hasn't any sense at all, to begin with. It's just the same thing, over and over again.



"'YES, YES,' SHE WOULD MURMUR ABSENTLY"

You sound like a phonograph, exactly. Now mother will tell you a story about Old Mother Hubbard, she went—"

"An' er shicken?"

"No, there's no chicken in this one. That's why mother picked it out. Now listen."

"An' er aut'mobile?"

"No, there isn't any automobile, either."

An expression of proud superiority appeared upon the face of the listener. His story contained both these points of interest, and was of more value in his eyes than many foolish nursery rhymes notoriously deficient in either article.

"Binks tell 'er hory!"

"Well, then, Binks tell it. Where did Mother Hubbard go? To the—"

"Aut'mobile! An' er met er shicken. An' 'em played, an' 'em—"

"Foiled again!" observed Mr. Wilbour cheerfully, arriving for his Saturday home luncheon. "Did you really think you could do it? There is one thing to be said for that child, and gratifying it is to me to be able to say it: for steadiness of purpose, indomitable perseverance, as they say in biographies, I don't know his equal. And some people doubt the power of heredity!"

"I don't know who could doubt it, once they heard Binks chatter!" Susy returned promptly.

"Oh, as to *that* characteristic, you are a little hard on yourself, my dear," her husband assured her. "I should hardly like to say that you chattered. Not that you are not perfectly able to keep up your end of a conversation, but I doubt if you talk more than most women."

"That's all right," Susy persisted, "and very clever, but you ought to have heard your Aunt Ella when she first listened to Martin talk. 'Well, well,' she said, 'doesn't that remind you of Tom Wilbour! Not the words, you know, but the way he keeps it up, somehow!'"

"Pooh! Aunt Ella Wilbour! That comes well from her, I must say!" Tom shouted indignantly. "The biggest talker in Greenfield! Perfectly famous for it—known far and wide. Why, I've heard that woman converse steadily for forty-five minutes by the clock—actually timed her! She'd ask for a drink of water, just like a lecturer, and you had to wait while she drank it, and then on she'd go again. Aunt Ella, indeed!"

"I don't doubt it for a moment," Susy answered with appreciation, "and that simply shows, as you say, the power of heredity. It's evidently settled in your family."

Mr. Wilbour grinned and tactfully turned the conversation.

"But why should he be so everlastingly set on that automobile-chicken combination?" he queried. "It's the most perfectly absurd thing I ever heard in my life. Did you ever tell him about an auto and a chicken eloping?"

"I? Never! How should I think of such a thing? He's always told that story that way. And there's that one about the telephone and the little pig and Tuesday afternoon—he always finishes that one with, 'An' 'er called 'er up *Tuesday* afternoon!'"

"Queer," Mr. Wilbour mused. "Modern inventions seem to strike him most forcibly. You know, Susy, I think you and Aunt Emma are bringing the child up wrong in that regard. You try to stuff his mind with foolish nursery tales of a by-gone age, and his scientific brain revolts at it. All that Little-boy-blue-baa-baa-black-sheep-simple-Simon nonsense simply fatigues him, and he tries to restore his balance with a little realism in his own inventions. Now after luncheon I'll tell that boy a story that will do him some good and suit him down to the ground."

True to his word, Tom took his son on his knee a little later, and having succeeded in silencing him by alternate bribes and threats, began the following tale:

THE MOTOR-CAR AND THE CELERY SQUAB

"Once upon a time a twenty horse-power electric, ball-bearing, copper-plated, double-back-action, patent-applied-for racing-machine named the Pink Terror met a celery-fed squab named Louise, and since they were going the same way, asked if they might travel together for a while.

"'Yes, indeed,' the squab replied, 'if your chauffeur knows his business, for I am too valuable to lose. My mother stamped my egg with the date on which it was laid as soon as that process had been accomplished, for she was an orderly fowl, living in a model hennery, and ate only Threaded Grain biscuits packed by sterilized machinery, and never drank with her meals. Later the head of the hennery gave me hypodermic injections of extract of celery and I practised deep breathing exercises from a health magazine over an onion-patch twice a day, on rising and retiring, so that I am practically all flavored now, and in a few more days I shall sell for five dollars a pair in the city.'

"'Have no fear,' replied the motor-car; 'my chauffeur is an electrical expert, and if anything goes wrong he will not only acquaint your hennery by wireless telegraphy with the matter, but he will preserve you by means of liquid air and

"THE MOTOR-CAR AND THE CELERY SQUAB"

send you to the city *via* the pneumatic-tube delivery, so that the bloated capitalist who expects to serve you at his dinner to the arbitration committee will not be disappointed. And if by chance you should happen to disagree with the particular baron of finance who eats you, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that the Roentgen rays will give to the world the exact reason why you inconvenienced him.'

"'In that case,' said the squab, 'I will accompany you with pleasure. Just wait a moment while I drop a nickel in this slot and get a pair of goggles and a green veil—'"

But at this point, either because he could think of no more modern inventions or because Martin was peacefully snoring against his shoulder, the narrator ceased abruptly and sighed.

"You see how it is," he explained, "his mind is so weakened by the sort of thing he has been hearing lately, that he simply can't stand the stronger diet that his nature really craves. It's too bad. I could do so much for him—"

"You could let him sleep, poor child," Aunt Emma suggested, "that's the best thing you can do. He woke up last night and talked to himself for an hour almost, so he's tired to-day. And of course it never disturbed Susy a moment. I heard him from my room and came in to see

what was the matter, and there he was sitting up in the crib, saying something about Tuesday afternoon, and Susy fast asleep in her bed, not three feet away from him."

"Well, Aunt Emma, you certainly didn't want me to wake up, just to listen to that pig-telephone story, did you?" Susy inquired defensively. "I have heard it so many times! If you feel that you must hang over the crib and listen to it at two o'clock in the morning just out of politeness, you may, but I think, myself, it's going too far."

"It isn't that, Susy, but it seems so strange that I should hear him and you not—"

"Oh, he's always imposed on you shamefully, Aunt Em, from the beginning," Tom broke in.

"But his own mother—"

"Oh, Aunt Emma! When I have been a good sleeper all my life, why on earth should I develop insomnia just because Martin happens to wake up? I don't change all my habits just because I'm his mother, do I?"

"Apparently not"—Aunt Emma's tone was most decisive—"but a great many people do, to a certain extent. There is Minnie Sears. She told me that when she was a girl two people always had to call her in the morning—"

"Two? Which two? Why two? Any two?"

Tom and Susy demanded simultaneously, and then, struck by the comic-opera effect, burst into laughter which marred the impressiveness of Aunt Emma's further statements.

"I don't mean two people, necessarily — I mean she had to be called twice, Tom. She slept so soundly. But afterwards she said that if William or the baby had a bad dream, even, she seemed to feel it immediately and woke directly—it was a kind of intuition."

Susy pursed her lips and elevated her eyebrows.

"Oh yes, Minnie was always having intuitions," she observed sceptically. "I remember she had one once that William was sick or in need of her, or something, and she came back into town at ten o'clock at night in August, and he had locked the apartment and gone to Manhattan Beach to sleep—it was a perfectly sickening day with the thermometer a thousand and something. And the janitor hadn't any key."

"Why, Susy, how dreadful! I never heard about that. What did she do?"

"Oh, she cried and made a fuss, and then she had to go and ask the family in the apartment behind hers if she could send the hall-boy in to crawl across from their dumb-waiter. And she didn't like to do that, because she wouldn't speak to the woman there because she was di-

vorced, and Minnie would never bow, even in the elevator, although the woman's maid had found Dot crawling down the stairs and brought her back. But she had to do it, just the same, so she finally did, and then they weren't there at all—they had gone for the summer and sublet it to a queer sort of man who was a friend of theirs. And it was half-past ten by the time she decided to send the hall-boy to ask them, and he came back and said it was a gentleman there and he wouldn't let him in till he had seen the lady herself. So Minnie went herself, and when she got in the hall it was all full of furniture and the man was cleaning the parlor—he had a broom and a duster. It seems he was an occultist, and so he did the housework at night—"

"Susan Martin, are you raving mad? What do you mean? An occultist?"

"That's what I said—an occultist. Don't you know about Madame Blavatsky? It was when everybody had Ouija boards, you know. He used to sleep in the daytime, and so—"

"Oh, well, it's all right, probably. It makes my brain reel a little, but no doubt it will pass. Go on. I always wondered what occultism meant, and this is the first time I ever got a really definite idea of it. They clean house at night, then. Well! well! It's easy to pick 'em out,

isn't it? There's no excuse for ever getting caught with one, is there? Do they have to swear to do it?"

"Don't be absurd, Tom. I don't know anything whatever about it—only what Minnie told me. It doesn't follow that all occultists do it, only this one happened to. Anybody else might —an Episcopalian, for instance—"

"Never! Don't you think so for a moment. Did you ever know one that did?"

"Well, no; but that's not the point, anyway. He told Minnie that it was quieter at night, and cooler, and he'd rather do his work then. He was an editor of an occultist magazine. He kept a maid, but he said she wasn't very neat, and he'd rather clean, himself, than do it after her. So she only washed and ironed, for he was a vegetarian, and he just ate nuts and prunes in the summer—"

"Toots, this is the most extraordinary yarn I ever heard in my life. Are you perfectly—"

"I am only telling what Minnie told me. I never saw the man. And it's no use asking me about it, Tom, for I don't know any more than I'm telling you.

"So Minnie thought he was crazy and she ran out of the hall and wouldn't go near him again, nor let the boy. And she sat in the hall—her

own hall—all night, for she wouldn't go to a hotel alone. And in the morning, when she

"'SO MINNIE THOUGHT HE WAS CRAZY'"

knew William would be at the office, she called him up, and said she was there and couldn't get

in. And he didn't understand that she'd had all those things happen to her, and he must have thought she'd come in that morning, for he just sent up the key by a boy, and a note telling her that he'd given the maid a vacation till Monday, it was so hot."

"That was one on Minnie, wasn't it?" Tom chuckled. "I'll bet she was—er, displeased?"

"She gave the key back to the boy without saying a word, and took the first train for Meadow Lake. She said it nearly killed her."

"Poor girl! I don't wonder, sitting in that nasty hall all night," Aunt Emma sympathized, with a reproving scowl for Tom.

"Oh, it wasn't that. It was getting such a note with the key, and no sympathy for all she'd gone through."

"But, good heavens, Toots, how was Sears to know what she'd gone through? He didn't even know she was in the city. He isn't an occultist —I'll say that much for him."

"Oh, of course. Still, it seemed hard, when she came in just for him—"

"Great Scott! Do you know what I'd do if any woman ever did that to me? I'd fix her out! I'd teach her some common-sense if I had to sit up nights to do it! I'd—"

"Now, Tom, Minnie couldn't help her intuition."

"Oh, couldn't she? Well, she could help acting like an idiot, whether she had an intuition or not. Couldn't she have 'em and stay at home?"

"Why, no, not if she felt she must go. That's what intuitions are for."

"The deuce they are! You'll observe it didn't help her out much—her intuition. If ever you should have one, Sue, I'll be obliged if you'll telegraph!"

"Don't worry, Tommy dear; I don't have 'em. Will gave her a lovely stick-pin, though, with a diamond in it, afterwards."

"There you are! If ever an ass walked this mortal earth below, it's William H. Sears. Premium on intuitions, wasn't it? Bright idea. What a chump that man is! Diamond! Bread and water was what she needed. And I'd give it to her, too."

"No, you wouldn't, Tom. You know very well."

At this point Martin, who had been deposited on the sofa, awoke with a jerk and began mechanically to narrate the story of the pig and the telephone. It was useless to endeavor to distract his attention; he fixed them firmly with his eye, and, like the wedding guest, they could not choose but hear, for though his accent was not one of flawless purity, a nameless decision in his tone, a certain indescribable flavor of personality, gave

the impression of a monologue entirely adult in its nature, and one felt that interruption or departure before the climax of the story would stamp one as hopelessly beyond the social pale. So they listened with a perfunctory appreciation, as Martin, with definite if somewhat inapplicable gestures, rehearsed the adventures of his second set of dramatis personæ.

"Once er time er was er pig an' er *blew* an' er puff, an' er *blew* an' er puff, an' er *blew* an' er puff, an' er *blew* er house down!

"An' er call 'er up on Sunday—all gone away! An' er call 'er up on Monday—all gone away! An' er call 'er up on Tuesday af'ernoon an' er central shut 'er off.

"'Somebody been lyin' in *my* bed!' an' er pig said no.

"'Somebody been lyin' in *my* bed!' an' er pig said no.

"'Somebody been lyin' in *my* bed, an' er lyin' there now!' an' er pig said yes. An' er call 'er up on—"

"Oh, come, Binks, that's not fair! You told that!"

"Let him alone, Tom—he always does that once more."

"—on Sunday—all gone away!" the raconteur proceeded triumphantly, with the inexplicable gesture of a farmer employing a scythe.

"—*Tuesday* af'ernoon an' er central shut 'er off," he concluded, at this point waving his hand as if to a friend on a departing steamer.

There was a pause of some seconds and Tom opened his mouth to speak, but was checked by Susy's warning finger. The epilogue was yet to come. Presently, with a rapidity so great as to be almost unintelligible, the concluding sentence was shot at them, accompanied by a confusing whirlwind of pantomime.

"An' bumby 'em found som'p'n 'em could do pretty well an' 'em went an' did it!"

They rose in haste and thanked him briefly for his performance.

"Such a pleasant afternoon!" Tom remarked politely. "How do you think of such fascinating stories?"

"Binks tell hory! Binks tell nice hory?" he suggested eagerly, but the immediate and simultaneous protest that arose from the audience convinced even Master Wilbour of its sincerity.

"Not to-day, thanks, if you don't mind," his father suggested, "some other time, perhaps. . . ."

And then as unmistakable evidence of the approaching repetition in the shape of preparatory gestures alarmed him, he continued argumentatively: "Look here! what do you expect, anyhow? When I tell you a story, what do you do? You

go to sleep. I'll bet you can't tell me now what my story was about. Can you?"

Binks was staring blankly ahead, his lips moving unconsciously.

"'AN' BUMBY 'EM FOUND SOM'P'N 'EM COULD DO PRETTY WELL!'"

"Shicken met er aut'mobile," he muttered, agitating his feet violently from the ankle as if he were running a sewing-machine.

Tom grinned. "I didn't think you caught the drift of it, really, at the time, but it seems you

did," he apologized. "I take it all back. Suppose we go out for a walk, and maybe we'll meet an aut'mobile ourselves and change the current of your mind for a while?"

Later, as the family of three moved slowly across to the Park, Binks protected from the January air by woolly gray leggings, cap, and gloves, which gave him the appearance of a plump and talkative squirrel, his father continued his criticisms, pausing abruptly at intervals to disentangle his son from the successive lamp-posts and railings around which it was his custom to entwine himself.

"You will never be great, never!" he complained. "All great men were silent. There were William of Orange, and Napoleon, and Grant, and that man that made so much money in Wall Street—they were all silent men. All great deeds— Look out, Binks! You'll get your head caught between those things some day so you won't get it out in a hurry! Didn't you ever hear about the boy and the jar of nuts? I'll tell you that story some day—"

"Binks tell nice hory? Binks tell—"

"No, you don't. Not this time. You just keep quiet."

"It's your own fault, Tom, for mentioning s-t-o-r-y. You know it always sets him off. See,

Martin, see all those dear little dogs! One, two, three, four little darling dogs all running along together. Isn't that nice?"

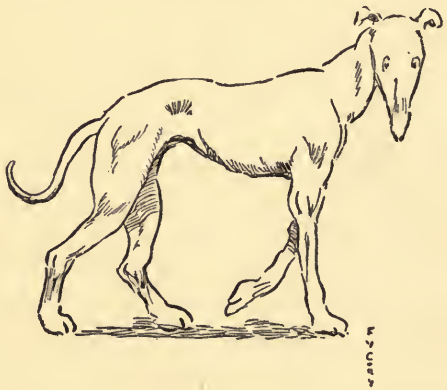
Martin beamed ecstatically.

"WHICH GAVE HIM THE APPEARANCE OF A PLUMP AND TALKATIVE SQUIRREL"

"All er dogs—all er dogs!" he cried, stretching out his arms towards the mongrel procession, just then on a line with them.

"Er farver dog," he announced, as a waddling

semi-pug rounded the corner; "er murver dog," as a lean, polka-dotted specimen of what is sometimes known as the carriage-dog limped past; "er Binkie dog," he greeted an animal with every effort to present the appearance of a fox-terrier, but of a too obviously mixed ancestry; "an' er Aunt Emma dog!" he shrilled at the dejected greyhound that brought up the rear of the procession, to the unconcealed delight of an old gentleman who chuckled audibly as he walked past.



"DISTINCT AND UNDENIABLE RESEMBLANCE TO THEIR SOMEWHAT ANGULAR RELATIVE"

Tom and Susy, irresistibly struck by a distinct and undeniable resemblance to their somewhat angular relative, watched the retreating grey-

hound with an attempt at dignity which might have succeeded had not the animal turned its head and regarded them distrustfully.

"Hello, Aunt Emma dog!" their son called cheerily, and at the reproving expression of the long, narrow face, the look in the eyes that said plainly, "You are encouraging that child again, Tom and Susy, and very wrongly!" the young people burst into laughter so infectious that Binks hopped around them, crowing joyfully, and the passers-by smiled in sympathy.

So long did they stand, indeed, that Susy, alarmed at a premonitory snuffle, hurried Martin home without a sight of the horses that he loved, and counselled Belle to rub his face well with cold-cream when she put him to bed.

The babble of his adventures rang through the house during the hour of his supper and disrobing; they looked at each other in mute wonder. Was it possible that not so many months ago they had waited for his words as for pearls and rubies? Was this the child whose uncanny silence had stricken them with shame in the presence of other young parents? His voice was high and clear; no door could shut out its intonations. He chanted with a steadily rising inflection the saga of his past day interwoven with irrelevant excerpts from the pig-telephone story and one

other, his longest, which dealt mysteriously with a cup and saucer, a lady and a pianola: details of this even Aunt Emma avoided determinedly.

"At least he won't talk all night," Susy declared, "we sha'n't hear him now till morning."

But it was her cries that called them to his crib the next day, and no chatter of Binks, who lay unaccountably silent, staring at them from a white and strangely wrinkled countenance, his lips evidently sealed, his eyes mere points.

"Wha-what is it? Oh, Susy, what is the matter with him? Look at his face! Martin dear, can't you speak?" wailed Aunt Emma.

A kind of shudder appeared to stir the immovable lines of his countenance, but his lips did not open, though his hands twitched nervously.

Tom ran to the telephone.

"What's the doctor's number?" he asked hoarsely—"two-three-eight?"

Susy leaned over the crib, her eyes on the child's dreadful wrinkled pallor, her lips working, her hand on his heart.

"He-he feels warm," she whispered, "he isn't st-stiff at all. Oh, what shall I do? Baby, speak to mother! Does it hurt you?"

Belle appeared at the foot of the crib, her hair hanging, her face pale with fright.

"Oh, Mrs. Wilbour! Oh, the face on him! Is

it a fit? Shall I get hot water? Will you look at his mouth, all tight, like— Did you feel his pulse, ma'am?"

She was pushed aside suddenly by a bare red arm, and Norah, with a hasty glance at the ter-

"AND THEY LISTENED THANKFULLY TO THE TALE OF THE CUP AND SAUCER"

rifying face in the crib, lifted the child carefully and put him across her knees in the full light from the window.

"For the love of— Ah, now, look at that, will ye?" she exclaimed, and picking at the creased,

blue-white skin, she broke off a patch of it as if it were a brittle mask. A shriek from Susy—and below the apparent wound appeared the pink warm cheek of her son. With a sniff of disgust Norah pried off another section of the coating, and extending it to the agonized Belle, she inquired coldly,

"An' what have ye been shticken' the poor child up with? How can he open his mouth at all? Is it glued him you have? Get some hot water and soak it off'n him—it 'll tear his skin."

Susy had sunk upon the floor, but Aunt Emma advanced.

"What did you put on Martin's face, Belle?" she asked severely.

"Cr-cream, ma'am, Miss Wilbour, from the tube, like I always do," the nurse stammered.

A shriek from Susy turned their eyes towards her. In her hand she held a large tube; she laughed weakly through a flood of tears.

"It's photographic paste, Aunt Emma," she faltered, "I left it in here. It—it was too thick, and it hardened over night!"

"Ye gods!" Tom said solemnly, his knees stiffening. "Ye gods!"

"I'll be going down again, Mrs. Wilbour," Norah announced with dignity, "and I'd give you a taste of advice, Belle, not to be so hasty

to get down to your company of ev'nin's, me girl."

But Belle was oblivious, remorsefully sponging Martin's face with warm water, and as the accustomed features melted into view and the sealed lips opened tentatively, her repentance took an active and adequate form. Forgetful of his relatives' presence, she cooed over him, even as Susy stroked his hands and Aunt Emma kissed his bare toes.

"Precious lamb, was the nasty stuff all off? Could he talk, then? Tell Belle a story—do!"

And they listened thankfully, as to one returned from the dead, to the tale of the cup and saucer, the lady and the pianola!

X

WHICH DEALS WITH FAMILY DISCIPLINE

THE hotel at the head of the most unpronounceable lake in America was in its usual Saturday evening throes of excitement: the steamer was coming in. Bells shrilled through all the corridors, blue-capped officials leaped witlessly about, the hotel clerk smiled mechanically and shook his head at each fussy old lady who demanded her mail, children bumped into everybody in sight, and all able-bodied persons flocked down to the wharf.

"There she is! There she comes!" they cried in concert, like the chorus in an opera, and the canoes and row-boats fluttered excitedly about, the Yale and Harvard pennants at their bows flapping noisily below the Stars and Stripes, the brown, muscled arms of the boys in bathing-jer-

seys waving wildly in the air. The incoming of an ocean liner is a dull affair in comparison with the Saturday arrival of the *Wishemunkeewa*.

Foremost among the crowd stood Mrs. Thomas Wilbour in a deliciously ruffled affair of blue and white, a large flat sun-hat tied with blue mull strings balanced on her neat little head. An obviously unnecessary and proportionately attractive parasol with broad stripes of the same cool colors was tilted over her shoulder, and the effect of these garments, taken in connection with their wearer, was such as to elicit appreciative remarks from more than one person on the rapidly approaching steamer, to the great delight of the legal proprietor of all these charms. Mr. Wilbour was waving his hat with enthusiasm, and nodding his head unconsciously in answer to the voice behind him:

"Oh, mamma, see that pretty girl in blue! Isn't she sweet? And that dear little boy in the Russian blouse—do you suppose he's her—"

But at that moment the dear little boy in the Russian blouse emitted a shriek of joy, and announcing, "There he is! There's our daddy! I'm a-comin' there! Hello! How do you do?"—bounded off the wharf and disappeared from the horrified gaze of the passengers, now not twenty feet from the land.

"STOOD MRS. THOMAS WILBOUR"

A general exodus from the canoes and row-boats followed, and half the people on the wharf, apparently, plunged into the waves that had swallowed the adventurous infant, with the result that the entire scene changed, and, to quote Mr. Wilbour, gave a good imitation of a Sunday-school picnic in bathing, trying to rescue each other. The little steamer hissed and clanged and backed, the women shrieked, the men bit their lips and swore softly, and only when a brown, dripping youth held a small white-coated figure a foot out of the water, remarking placidly, "That's all right, fellows, break away! I'm more used to saving him than the rest of you," did the tumult begin to subside.

"Thank God the child is alive," observed a fat old gentleman in a white vest, as a cheerful voice from the Russian blouse announced, "Here I am, Mr. Daddy! How do you do? I had my hair cut!"

"What must be the feelings of his grateful mother?" continued the old gentleman, while the crowd stood sober around him. "How can she sufficiently express—"

"Thank you, Mr. Waring, it's awfully good of you," came a sweet voice from the pier, the voice of the young woman in blue and white. "Just drop him into the canoe—don't let him

get your mother all wet. I'm sorry all you other boys got wet. Mr. Waring always gets him."

The women on the deck looked at each other and gasped; the men stared and then laughed nervously; the boat grazed the pier.

Mr. Wilbour hurried down the gang-plank, and conscious of the attention of most of his fellow-passengers, confined himself to a grasp of his wife's hand that rendered it useless for practical purposes for an hour.

"How do you do?" he added severely to the small moist person riding up in triumph on the broad shoulders of his rescuer, surrounded by a dripping body-guard. "You seem to have put your foot in it, as usual?"

"I put 'em, both of my feet, 'way deep down —this is a wet lake," returned the small person, while the crowd roared with laughter, "and I had my hair cut!"

"So you observed on leaving the water. Does this, er, Siegfried's-funeral-march effect occur often?" his father inquired, as Martin, for it was no other, suddenly threw his head backward towards the nearest of his suite and continued the ascent of the little hill in the attitude of a dead warrior supported to the end by his faithful retainers.

"Three or four times a week he falls in," Susy explained mournfully, "and poor Mr. Waring—"

"'AND I HAD MY HAIR CUT!'"

"It's awfully good practice, really, you know," the rescuer interposed with a bow of introduction to Tom, his hands grasping Martin's ankles, which curled around his neck. "I've got so I can save him right end up, now, the first try. Can't I, old fellow?"

"You used to save m' feet first," the victim murmured resentfully, "an' I ate too much water."

"Oh, well, the first time, perhaps," Mr. Waring apologized, "but not now, do I?"

"You squeezed me in my tum-stummick once."

"That was because your—your trousers were so loose—I took up a handful."

"Don't be so particular, Binks," Susy observed absent-mindedly, wondering if Tom had packed her Mexican leather belt and quite unprepared for his shout of laughter.

"Now jump up and down in the summer-house, dear, and Belle will be out with your things in a moment," she added, and as they climbed the piazza steps Mr. Wilbour, looking back, beheld his son the centre of a ring of dancing youths who cheered the small figure prancing with determination in the middle, and focussed their shouts into a rousing chorus of "John Brown's Body."

"Our little one seems fairly popular," he re-

marked a few moments later, when Belle had been despatched to the summer-house with dry clothes and Susy was sitting on his knee, ruffling his hair from every direction towards the centre and kissing the tip of his nose at intervals.

"Popular? Why, Tommy, dearest, I'm terribly afraid he'll be spoiled—those boys simply worship him. There's really nothing for Belle to do; they take all the care of him. Mr. Waring has just fallen in love with him—he's teaching him to swim; and Wilton Keyes says he can almost paddle a canoe by himself—think of that, and he's only four! I'm afraid he isn't strong enough—"

"Oh, bosh!" Mr. Wilbour interrupted genially, "he's all right. I pinched his arm — the kid's hard as nails."

"But Belle gets quite jealous, Tommy; she says he's with the boys all the time, and she hardly sees him except to put him to bed, and lately Jack Waring's been doing that, too."

"That's all right. Do him good. He gets enough of Belle at home."

"I suppose so; but the boys spoil him more than Belle does, really. They just sit in a circle around him and he gives orders to do this and that, and they simply jump to do it."

"Ah!" Mr. Wilbour exclaimed with a studied

reminiscence, "do they? Well, well! I seem to remember very clearly where he gets that little trick—and they say there's not so much in heredity, after all!"

"You're a silly!" said Mrs. Wilbour, kissing

"'YOU'RE A SILLY!' SAID MRS. WILBOUR"

the end of his nose precipitately, "it's not the same thing at all!"

"No? Well, it works out the same in the

end, apparently, which is the main thing. How's the fishing—good?"

"I don't know, they don't seem to fish so much this year. Did you bring my belt?"

"That black, squashy one? Yes, it's in my suit-case. I nearly missed the train getting it in, too."

"Oh, Tom Wilbour! I said the leather one! I have two black belts here. Didn't you bring it?"

Tom squirmed.

"I'm not quite sure—that is, I think—"

"Tom, you didn't bring it!"

"Well, Toots, perhaps I didn't exactly *bring* it, but I—"

"Tom!"

"That is to say, perhaps not entirely, and from one point of view. On the other hand, I—"

"Tom, how can you be so absurd! Either you brought it entirely or not at all, and I see well enough—"

"What a clear head you have, anyhow, Toots!" her husband interposed admiringly. "Solomon was a vacillating old idiot, compared with you. Look here, could you use some chocolate nougat, instead of the belt? Because I *have* got that."

"Of course I could, Tommy dear, and it doesn't

make much difference, anyway. Where's the nougat?"

Mr. Wilbour struck an attitude.

"And there are still people who wonder why I married you!" he exclaimed. "Toots, you're a brick. If you'll be quite good and still, I'll go so far as to kiss you— Oh, here you are! Well, how do you do, my young friend? Now, don't tell me again that you had your hair cut, because if you do I shall arise and smite you. How long are you going to keep dry?"

He seized his son in his arms and lifted him to the ceiling, while Martin squealed joyfully and clutched the air.

"Mr. Waring turns me a summerstalk up there," he suggested as he reached the ground. "Why don't you, hey?"

"Don't say 'hey,' Martin," Susy corrected.

"Because Mr. Waring may be the half-back of the place, but your poor father slaves in the office of a soulless corporation, and has no time to develop assorted muscles, that's why."

"Hey?"

"Martin, mother told you not to say that— didn't you hear me?"

"Hey?"

Susy sighed and looked appealingly into space.

"Martin, I'm sorry to have to do this just as

father gets here, but you'll have to go into the other room and shut yourself in. Good-bye."

Martin began playing ostentatiously with a dog whip.

"Good-bye, Martin."

"Why, Susy, the child didn't know what you meant—he didn't realize—"

"Oh, Tom, you don't know! He realizes perfectly— I'll tell you later. Good-bye, Martin."

Martin hummed a tune and turned his back squarely on his parents.

"Shall I begin to count, Martin? One." Susy paused a moment, but with no effect.

"Two!"

Belle looked anxiously at her charge, who was tying the lash of the whip around a chair, utterly oblivious, it seemed, of the doom in store for him.

"Two, Martin!"

Susy frowned unhappily. Her horror at the dire possibility of having to articulate the final and fatal syllable was equalled only by her son's. What would happen in the event of her accomplishing it was known to neither of them, but they both had a wholesome dread of the nameless catastrophe.

"Th— Martin, hurry! Th—"

The whip clattered to the floor and Master Wilbour scuttled hastily to the adjoining bed-

room, with a backward glance as he cleared the threshold, as if to penetrate from that stronghold of obedience the mystery of the dreaded Three. In an access of virtue he clutched the knob with both hands and closed the door with an exem-

"HE CLUTCHED THE KNOB WITH BOTH HANDS"

plary restraint, leaving Belle with his parents on the other side.

"I'll have to tell you, Mrs. Wilbour, what Martin's just been saying to me, ma'am."

"Dear me, Belle, what is it?"

"He scolded me awful when I was dressing him, and told me I was infernally slow with his belt, ma'am."

"Why, Belle!"

"Yes, ma'am, and kicked out, too. Mr. Waring laughed right out. He made out to cough, but Martin knew, all right. He learns a lot of such talk from those young men, Mrs. Wilbour—"

"You can take your walk now, if you like, Belle, and Mr. Wilbour and I will take care of Martin. I'm sure Mr. Waring is very careful. He picks up a great deal from the boat-house man."

"Yes, ma'am," said Belle meekly, but she sniffed audibly as she went out.

"You seem," Mr. Wilbour remarked with interest, as the door closed behind the nurse, "to be up against it, as it were. Why don't you spank him?"

"Why don't I? Oh, Tommy, I *did!*"

"You did? When?"

"Last week, and I simply couldn't write you about it. It was too dreadful."

"Now, Susan Wilbour, don't tell me that you wept and wailed and all that nonsense, and told him it hurt you far worse, and a lot of rot like that. I thought you had more sense."

"I didn't—the idea! Of course I didn't like

to do it, and you may do it yourself after this, if you think it's so easy! As far as that goes, it *did* hurt me worse. But I didn't tell him so—at least, not exactly that—"

"Toots, Toots! What did you tell him? Own up, now."

"Well, I just said that I'd far rather he had to spank me, that's all."

Mr. Wilbour groaned.

"Another bright dream gone!" he cried, looking reproachfully at his wife. "I hoped you would be above it. All my life I have planned to marry a girl who *would* be above it. The real reason I took you, Toots, out of the throng that pressed about me—"

"The throng that—what?"

"The bevy of youth and beauty that elbowed around me," Mr. Wilbour continued placidly, "yes, exactly. The real reason, I say, why I selected you was as follows."

"*You* selected *me!*"

"Precisely, *I* selected *you*. Was it your idea that I secretly preferred another and that Aunt Emma drove me to an unhappy marriage?"

"Oh, please, Tommy!"

"Don't be a darling idiot—you know perfectly well. . . . As I say, the reason was this. I wanted to marry a girl who, when Martin reached the

age of—of active discipline, would fail to tell him that it hurt her worse, or words to that effect."

"But I didn't say that, Tom."

"Or words to that effect," her husband repeated firmly. "And now you have done it, and all has been in vain. Well, never mind; go on. What happened afterwards?"

"Why, after it was all over and I left him alone—"

"Wait a moment. What did you spank him with?"

"My slipper—I thought he'd feel worse about it, maybe."

"What kind of a slipper?"

"My red one."

"Not that little Japanese thing? Good Lord!"

"It *did* hurt, just the same."

"It must have, terribly. Why didn't you take a powder-puff?"

"You don't know anything about it, Tom."

"I never was whaled with it, if that's what you mean, but I have a sort of idea—"

"I tried it on my hand, first, and I know."

"My dearest, it probably made the dreaded knout and the cat-o'-nine-tails a summer zephyr, by comparison. What did the kid say?"

"He was quite surprised, at first; I don't think he believed I'd do it at all."

"Of course not! Why should he?"

"Tommy, I am really quite severe with him, sometimes—you know it."

"Um, we'll pass that by. Did he yell?"

"Not a bit. He cried, because his face was all covered with tears, afterwards, but he didn't wipe them off—he just gulped."

"Spunky little devil!"

"Then he walked off into Belle's room — he sleeps there, you know—and pretended nothing had happened. She wasn't there—she wouldn't stay where she could hear it: she went off in the grove and covered her ears with her hands, she said."

"For heaven's sake!"

"Well, she felt awfully. 'It's just begun, Mrs. Wilbour, it's just begun,' she said to me, 'and now who knows what may happen any day?'"

"What's the matter with her, anyway?"

"Why, nothing, dearest. Don't you see what she meant?"

"Well, no, I can't say I do. Does she mean he may rob the bank or go after me with an axe?"

"Of course not."

"The kid's got to get licked, you know, some day."

"I suppose so. So I looked in the glass—he didn't know I could see him that way—and when

he thought he was all alone he wiped his face on the towel. And then he went out to find Belle, and what do you think he said to her?"

"Told her he hadn't been licked?"

"No; I think he would have liked to, but he knew she knew. He told her he'd like her to write a letter to you for him. And she asked him why he didn't put a postscript to my letter, the way he usually does, but he said no, he wanted a special letter. She asked him what he wanted to say, and he said to tell you to bring a bottle of witch-hazel up with you when you came, and when she asked him what for, he said, 'So I can have it ready if this is going to happen to me often!'"

"Not really, Toots!"

"That's what Belle said, and she never could make it up, Tom."

"My country!"

"And she told him that I'd probably give him some, if he asked for it, just as when he falls down and barks his knee or something bites him; but he said no, he thought maybe I wouldn't, and he'd better have a bottle of his own!"

Mr. Wilbour shook his head solemnly.

"This is one too many for me," he admitted.

"And do you know what I thought of, Tommy? I remembered it directly. You know Aunt Emma

told me about the time you stole the cold turkey out of the refrigerator, and they had to have something canned when there was company for supper, and she made you learn the long Psalm?"

"The one that tells, 'I go about roaring all the day long'? You bet I remember it!"

"And you learned it so quickly, she was afraid it wasn't going to be punishment enough, and so she gave you another, and you told her that was a very poor way to bring up a child, to make him hate the Bible, because when he grew up he would never read it?"

Mr. Wilbour chuckled.

"That was the time I had her," he remarked. "She was scared stiff."

"And then she got her brother to come over and whip you, because she thought that eight years old was too big for a woman to whip, and he whipped you—"

"He did that," Tom agreed, "he did it to a finish. I always had a respect for Uncle Ed till the day he died."

"And then some boys happened to come over to play with you, and you went right out just as if nothing had happened, and when they asked, 'What shall we play?' you said, 'I don't care a darn, as long as there's no sitting down in it!'"

"Aunt Em will never forget that—never!"

At this point a faint, polite knock at the bedroom door distracted their attention from these profitable reminiscences.

"Who is there?" Susy demanded instantly.

"Me," a subdued voice replied.

"Do you want anything?"

"Yes," murmured the voice.

"What is it you want?"

A dead silence followed. Susy's expression indicated that the conduct of this conversation was not altogether unfamiliar, that it was, indeed, more in the nature of a formula.

"Did you want anything?" she repeated with an impersonal courtesy, so far as anything that Susy did could be called impersonal.

A squirming on the other side of the door was indicated by the indecisive sliding of the knob. Finally the voice, which was apparently pledged to the monosyllable, announced faintly,

"No."

"Oh, very well. I thought perhaps you did."

The silence in the other room became distinctly oppressive. Tom waited with interest.

"Does he get any dinner?" he inquired.

"Oh, Tom, of course! I can't starve the child!"

"No, I suppose not," he admitted.

"Did you ever hear about my father? Grandfather said he'd have to stop just where he was,

once, and apologize, and it happened to be the cellar stairs. So he sat there and stuck it out. And the old gentleman wouldn't let up on him, and he sat there two days."

"Tom!"

"And fainted away at the end of the second. How's that?"

"Fainted away?"

"Just so. From lack of food."

"Oh, Tom, how — how awful! How— I'm going to have them send Martin's supper up now."

"I don't believe he's exactly at the unconscious point, my dear. He's probably good for half an hour, anyway."

But so long a test was not necessary, for just then another knock was heard.

"Who is there?" Susy inquired.

"Your *de-ar* little boy!" came in melting tones from beyond the door. Susy breathed a sigh of relief.

"What does he want?" she asked, rising and making for the voice.

"He's going to be good."

"Does he want to say he's sorry?"

"I—I guess so," and the door opened an inch.

"Wait! Are you sure?"

"Yes!" cooed the voice, and the prodigal entered dramatically and leaped into his mother's arms.

"LEAPED INTO HIS MOTHER'S ARMS"

"It's certainly very impressive — very," Mr. Wilbour remarked. "You should have been a warden or a sheriff or something of that sort, Toots, something that requires a heart of stone, you know."

And the reunited family unpacked the newcomer's trunk in a gratifying harmony.

But Tom was doomed to disillusionment, if he had counted on a continuation of his last year's vacation, when a word had sufficed to silence his son's exuberance and Belle's society had contented her charge indefinitely. The joy of talking to himself had palled when once he knew the stimulus of a willing audience of strangers, and his social instincts seemed likely to swamp the boat, to use his father's metaphor.

"Am I to be known as the father of Binks the Babbler?" he demanded sternly. "Are you willing, Susy, to go down to posterity as the parent of Martin the Monologuist? I think not. Not if I can help it. If you say another word, my sweet child, till we round that point, I'll leave the baby on the shore, as the song says, tomorrow."

They were rowing down the lake; Tom in business-like knickerbockers at the oars, Susy in trim white duck, with a novel and the indispensable parasol, in the stern, and Martin in a forethought-

ful bathing-suit and jersey between her knees. Tom feathered his oars scientifically and congratulated himself audibly on having rewound his reel the night before.

Susy leaned back contentedly, the unopened book on her lap, her eyes apparently on the distant shore line, but conscious in reality of every movement of the muscular arms in front of her. The two she loved best in the world were within reach of her hand, she was not freckling this summer, and the house would be entirely repapered when they got back. She was perfectly happy.

Martin, forbidden to talk to anything in sight, murmured a greeting to the fish his father intended to catch, and endeavored to rock the boat furtively. The water clucked and chuckled at the bow as they cut across the wind; Tom's stroke had strengthened wonderfully in a short time.

Presently he threw out the line in a quiet cove. "Now, here's where we ought to get one," he announced, "right around this stump."

"Do they like stumps?" Susy inquired lazily. "Why?"

Tom was scowling over his rod and made no answer, but Martin undertook the explanation.

"I love stumps, too," he burst forth. "I love

stumps an' *black* bass an' strobbry ice-cream an' my *Heav'nly* Father! An' I—"

"Binks!"

"An' the fish will bite an' bite an' *bite* your head off, an' where'll you be then?" he demanded, springing up suddenly and bumping his mother's chin till the tears stood in her eyes.

"Here, get off that fly! You'll hook yourself! Get off, I tell you! Oh, heavens! sit still just where you are! You're all tied up in that line! Get that fly out of his sleeve, will you, Susy?"

"*Fly* away home; your house 's on fire 'n' y'r *childrens* are gone," Martin continued dreamily. "There's a gull-bird an' a hawk-bird an' a eagle-bird, an' they *all* love me!"

"Where?" Tom cried hastily, while the reel ran rapidly out as his hand slipped.

"I don't know; somewhere, I guess," Binks replied with nonchalance. "Did you see any, daddy?"

Susy giggled at her husband's disgusted snort and held her son quiet while Tom reeled in in dignified silence.

But the bass failed to rally around him with the unanimity he had hoped for, and his spirits were not raised by his son's cheerful comments on that fact.

"Mr. Waring gets eight or nine or six bass-fish,

don't he, muvver? They jump in the boat and then they sit down and hold their mouth apart, *don't* they? I had one in my lap, *didn't* I? I gave it a sweet, *swee-et* kiss, *didn't* I? On its back. I wish Mr. Waring was here—*he'd* get me a bass-fish!"

"I'll get you something you won't like, if you don't stop rocking the boat," his father stated succinctly. "Look here, Toots, do you allow him to act this way in a boat? That's all wrong. He behaved himself better in one last year. I'll have to speak to those boys about it—it's dangerous."

"Why, I'm right here, Tom."

"That's nothing to do with it. It's no joke to spill three people into the water, I can tell you. The first thing to learn about a boat is to—"

"Is to *sit* on the floor!" screamed Martin in an unintelligible spasm of naughtiness, jumping with both feet into the middle of the boat and falling heavily on the rod, which snapped and cracked at the second joint.

Tom hastily righted the boat, with set teeth.

"Sit just where you are and don't move till we get home," he commanded sternly, "and I'll attend to your case there. Susy, be quiet."

They sped along in silence, the mute offender cowering in the middle between his father's feet,

the demon driven out of him by the very force of his sudden wickedness.

In silence Mr. Wilbour fastened the boat, in silence he loaded the cushions in one arm and

"'IS TO SIT ON THE FLOOR,' SCREAMED MARTIN"

seized his son's reluctant hand, in silence he walked up the hill.

"Tom, are you going to—to—"

"I am going to give him a good whipping, yes," he answered shortly. "He might have drowned us all. This thing has got to be settled once for all, Susy, and sitting in Belle's room for ten minutes isn't going to do it. He knows perfectly well how wrong it was. Come with me, Martin."

"Oh, Tom, you'll be careful—"

"I think you can trust me, Susy."

"You won't let me?"

"Certainly not."

Susy fled to her room and waited in terrified suspense, her head buried in the pillows. Ten minutes went by, fifteen—was he whipping him all this time? Twenty minutes.

"Oh, Tom, Tom, how can you?" she wept.

The door opened and her husband appeared, alone, with a strange expression of countenance.

"Where is he? Oh, Tom, where is he?"

"He is engaged in conversation with the hotel clerk, I believe."

"Did you hurt him? Tom, what did you do it with—a stick?"

"No."

"A—a strap?"

"Don't be silly. Of course not."

"Did he cry hard?"

"No."

"Why—then—what happened, Tom?"

Mr. Wilbour lit a cigarette with care, and sat down before replying.

"What happened?" he repeated, "what happened? Well, I'll tell you. I took that little scoundrel out in the grove and I told him that since he was old enough to be as bad as that he

was old enough to get a good licking, and I was going to give it to him. I told him how dangerous it was to jump that way, and how he might have drowned us all, and I reminded him that he knew all that perfectly well—knew it last year, in fact. Then I took a little stick I'd picked up —I took it more to impress him than anything else; a little curved-up stick like a small barrel hoop."

Here Tom paused and puffed violently at his cigarette.

"Well?" Susy cried breathlessly, "well?"

"I told him I was going to whip him with this, the way we whipped the pup when he'd been naughty. That was to make him ashamed of himself."

"Well?" Susy cried again.

"Well, that's all."

"That's all? Didn't you go on?"

"No. He said it wouldn't work."

"He said— Tom Wilbour, what do you mean?"

"What I say. He gave me a mathematical demonstration.

"'You'd better get another spanker,' he said.

"'What d' you mean?' said I.

"'You can't spank with that,' says he.

"'Why not?' said I.

"'Because,' says he, as cool as a cucumber on ice, 'if you spank with it up side down you won't hurt me much, and if you spank with it

"MARTIN CONVERSED PLEASANTLY WITH THE HOTEL CLERK"

down side up you'll hit your own nose. That's what you told Belle when she spanked the

puppy. You have to have a straight stick to spank with!'

"I tell you, Sue, I felt queer. I just stared at him. Finally I managed to say, 'Oh, you think so, do you?'

"'Yes,' says he, 'I do. Here's the kind of a stick to spank with!' and he picked one up and handed it to me. Actually.

"Well, that let me out, you know. That really was a little too much."

Here Mr. Wilbour relit the cigarette, which had gone out, and puffed again.

"How—how do you mean?"

"Why, good heavens, Toots, how can I whip a boy who picks me out a stick to do it with, and throws in a little advice, with his compliments? If you want to, you can, that's all. I told him that he couldn't go out in a boat again for a week, and not with you and me again this summer. I didn't keep him out altogether, because I want him to get used to a canoe. So don't let's talk any more about it. Come on out to the court — they're playing the men's doubles."

Mrs. Wilbour drew a long breath and flashed a curious little glance at her husband.

"Then you didn't whip him at all?" she asked softly.

"No," said her husband, looking persistently away from her, "I didn't. Come on."

And down in the great open hall Martin conversed pleasantly with the hotel clerk.

XI

WHICH DEALS WITH THE ABDICATION OF BINKS

SUSY, lying near the fire and drowsing deliciously, had long been conscious of an undercurrent of vague sadness in her thoughts, a confused sensation as of something gloomy and regretful. Somebody was mourning, unhappy, insistent—was she dreaming? If so, she must wake herself and break the spell; she struggled a moment and her thoughts grew clearer. There was the fire, here was her book, it was four o'clock—and yet the mournful sound haunted her. Louder and clearer it grew as she listened, and divided itself into two elements: one, some instrument, blowing at regular intervals a strange, muted blast, the other a human voice, of a peculiar nasal quality, intoning in heavily accented measure a monotonous kind

"SUSY, LYING NEAR THE FIRE"

of tuneless chant. The voice had a certain familiarity about it, but—

"Belle," she cried nervously, "what is that noise?"

"What noise, Mrs. Wilbour? I don't hear nothing."

"Nonsense, Belle! I don't suppose I am out of my head! Listen. . . ."

"Oh! that's Martin, Mrs. Wilbour; he's having a funeral."

"A funeral?"

"Yes, ma'am. The other goldfish died this noon, and he's kind of celebrating it. I'll open the door and you'll see."

Through the open door the chant shrilled clearly; words were now audible:

> "JAMES *and* HATTIE *are* DEAD, *dead, dead,*
> JAMES *and* HATTIE *are* DEAD!"

A long, weird blast on the instrument, which now suggested a comb covered with tissue-paper, followed; the rhythmic tramp of feet continued the accent. Then the chant again:

> "JAMES *and* HATTIE *are* DEAD, *dead, dead,*
> JAMES *and* HATTIE *are* DEAD!"

"What is he doing, Belle?"

"I'll go and see, ma'am," and Belle tiptoed

across the hall and half-way down the stairs. A moment she hung there, staring into the dining-room, then returned wide-eyed.

"He's got his pajamas on over his clothes, Mrs. Wilbour, and Mr. Wilbour's high hat, and

"'JAMES AND HATTIE ARE DEAD, DEAD, DEAD!'"

that long mournin' veil that Miss Emma had on for her brother's funeral pinned to the front of it so's you can't see his face at all, ma'am. He does look awful. And the way he says 'dead,

dead, dead'! He's got the waste-basket out of the libr'y on the middle of the table, and he just walks round and round it. Hear him, now!"

"They are dead, they are dead, they are dead,
They will never come back any more!
First James died, and came up to the top,
And then Hattie died and now they are in heaven,
And God is patting their backs!"

"Oh, make him stop, Belle! Send him up here. How can he think of such things?"

A rapid descent of the stairs, a suddenly interrupted flourish on the comb, a hasty whispered colloquy, ending, "Don't you frighten your mother, now, with any more foolishness!" and Master Wilbour entered the room, divested of the trappings of his woe.

"What *were* you doing, Martin dear?" Susy asked him, clutching his warm little hands in her own and kissing the back of his neck.

"Oh, I was just singing a little hymn to James and Hattie—poor Hattie died while we were eating our dinner. Didn't you know? I was going to keep 'em in my drawer, but Belle took 'em out. Belle don't like 'em when they're dead."

"Oh, Martin, of course not!"

"Don't you, either? I don't mind 'em. She threw Hattie in the waste-basket. They just

turn over and come up to the top, all of a sudden. That's all. Then are they in heaven?"

"I don't know, dear. Maybe."

"Why don't you know? Didn't you ever see any there? When I was there I saw lots of 'em. God kept 'em in the bath-tub. He—"

"Darling, what makes you talk like that? You know it isn't so."

"Oh, well, I wish I had a goat, like the Park! Why don't we have a goat?"

"Next year, Binks, you know. Father will get one next summer, and you'll have it in the country. Would you rather have a goat than anything else, dear?"

"Yes. Wouldn't you?"

"No, I don't think so. I'd rather have—something else."

"What?"

Susy kissed him again, and held him close to her.

"Would you like a little sister—all your own, to play with and love—would you, darling?"

"No," said her son promptly, "I wouldn't. Would you?"

Susy drew back, startled and incredulous. "Why, Martin, what do you mean? You wouldn't like a dear little baby sister, to live with us all the while? Mine and yours and dad's?"

"What do you want a baby sister for?"

"It wouldn't be my sister, Binks," shaking him gently, as if to settle his mind, "it would be yours. It would be— Oh, don't you see, Binks? Like Dorothy and Willie Sears."

"Why wouldn't it be your sister? You said so."

"Oh, Binks, how silly you are! She wouldn't be my sister any more than you're my brother."

"But I *am* your brother," said Martin flatly, pulling up the corners of his eyes and sticking out his tongue with a too-successful imitation of a boy he had seen in the street.

"Please get down from the sofa, Martin. You are very silly and very naughty, when I told you not to do that. I think it is time you had your supper."

Realizing that it was time, at any rate, to change his policy, her son here crept closer to her, and burrowing his head under her chin, murmured that he loved her. For a moment Susy hardened her heart and withstood him.

"Oh no, you don't. You only want a goat. You don't want to do as I say—you don't really love me."

He snuggled closer into her neck and patted her encouragingly. Like most of his sex, he had early learned that this sort of remark called for no logical reply, no supporting evidence; simple

"HE SNUGGLED CLOSER"

and continuous asseveration was more than sufficient.

"Oh yes, I do," he cooed, "I love you de-arly!"

His mother melted.

"Do you, dearest? And so do I love you!" she assured him. "And—have I been a good mother to you, do you think, Binks darling?"

"Yes, you've been pretty good," he assented, and then, instinctively feeling that the ridiculous creature was hurt, he added magnanimously, "you are the best of all my mothers!"

"Of all your mothers?" she faltered.

"The best one I ever had," he explained impatiently. "None of the rest of 'em was so pretty good!"

"When he talks like that, Tommy, he makes me so uneasy. What does he mean?" Susy inquired after dinner.

"Lord knows," her husband answered philosophically. "It's a pity Aunt Em has dropped her clubs; she'd have stuff enough to turn the other women green with envy. Remember how she used to complain because the kid didn't make enough startling remarks?"

"She doesn't any more. I told her what he said this afternoon, and she said it was a clear proof of—what is that thing she believes in, Tom —not co-education?"

Tom was helplessly silent.

"Co-operation?" Susy suggested.

"My dear girl, how do I know? Co-education is when the girls go out West to school and get engaged, isn't it? And co-operation makes you all wear the same cuffs and all have chops on Tuesday, so you get them cheaper, somehow. Upton got into a scheme like that once, and he said it made him sick to think that every family in the apartment was eating cauliflower at seven o'clock, and so he quit. Do you mean that?"

"N-no, I don't think so. It's when you believe that you were somebody else. Don't you remember the call Aunt Emma made, and there were three other women there, and they all said they used to be Mary Queen of Scots? And they were so cross with each other?"

"By George! yes. That beats anything I ever heard in a long and ill-spent life! You mean reincarnation, my poor child."

"Yes, that's what I say—reincarnation. You see, if Binks really remembers—"

"Bosh and nonsense! Toots, you wander in your blessed mind. The kid doesn't mean anything—you know that."

"Well, but, Tommy—"

"But nothing. Now look here. I suppose you think that young William Sears meant what

he said when he gave that little romance about his eye?"

"What eye?"

"Oh, didn't I tell you that? Sears told us last week or so. It seems that young William and his sister were rowing about the beauty of their father—which alone shows that they inherit his weak mind."

"Tom!"

"As I say. . . . Well, we'll pass that by. Dorothy said that he was not so good-looking as God, but young William said he was. They had it hammer and tongs for a while, and finally Dorothy, with that true feeling for logic displayed by all your charming sex, reminded young William that he'd never seen God and didn't know whether he was handsome or not.

"'Oh yes, I have,' says he. 'I know he's handsome, because when he put in my other eye I got a good look at him!'

"Now what do you think of that? Is it necessarily true?"

"Why, no, I suppose not."

"Very well, then don't bother about Binks. When you come to that, why is it necessary that what a child says should mean anything?"

"Because, Tom," Aunt Emma remarked as she entered the room, "a child, like the rest of us,

has a soul, and that soul is constantly moving on—"

"Like John Brown's," her nephew murmured irreverently. "I know. But I don't exactly mean that; I mean why should you think that everything a child says necessarily means something? We don't always drop pearls and diamonds whenever we open our mouths, do we? Don't we ever talk nonsense and just burble along to fill up the time?"

"Some of us certainly do a great deal of that," Aunt Emma agreed politely.

"Oh, well, that's all right. You know what I mean. And sometimes it may turn out to be quite deep, you know. It often does that with me," he added modestly.

An unstimulating silence followed this remark, but Mr. Wilbour pursued his theme unabashed.

"I haven't a doubt that that's the way Shakespeare, or the other gentleman of the same name, got off some of his best things—they meant a lot more after he'd said 'em than they did before. I mean, than he meant, before he said 'em. So you see— What was it we were talking about?"

"Good heavens, Tommy, if you don't know, do you suppose we do? I'd like to sit on your lap."

"The pleasure is mine," Mr. Wilbour respond-

ed gallantly, and Aunt Emma, who saw that Susy's spirits were for some reason depressed, tactfully took her sewing, which at this time consisted chiefly of embroidered white flannel, into another room.

"He doesn't want another, Tommy," Mrs. Wilbour declared mournfully.

Tom blinked rapidly and expressed with his eyebrows Herculean efforts to grasp his wife's meaning. As she paused, evidently for a reply, he ventured an,

"Oh!"

"No, not at all. Isn't it dreadful? He asked me what I wanted one for!"

Mr. Wilbour glanced wildly around the room and committed himself utterly by a deceitful,

"The idea!"

"I thought they always liked them," Susy continued unhappily. "Wouldn't it be awful if he should grow up to hate her!"

Mr. Wilbour felt the uselessness of a prolonged conversation along these lines and threw up his hands, to employ a metaphor.

"My darling girl, I feel perfectly sure you're right, whatever it is, but I haven't the dimmest idea what you're talking about," he owned.

Susy sighed.

"Why, Tom dear, what could I be talking

about but just what I said?" she inquired with a new pathos. "I mean that Binks doesn't want her!" and she buried her face on his shoulder.

"O-o-o-h!" he breathed comprehendingly. "The deuce he doesn't! Well," with a burst of inspiration, "what a blessing it is that the rest of us have better taste!"

Susy's arm tightened about his neck; she implanted a damp kiss on his collar.

"What makes him think he doesn't?" Tom continued after an interval.

"I don't know. But he's made up his mind, and you know how hard he is to change. Won't it be dreadful if—"

"Now, Toots darling, try to be a reasonable little girl! How can Binks know anything about what he will like or dislike? Just wait, and then we'll see. He doesn't know what he's talking about."

"You think he doesn't know much, Tom, but you do him a great injustice. He knows much more than you think. He has a soul, as Aunt Emma says, and—"

"My precious girl, what *are* you talking about? Which side are you taking? Do you *want* to believe that Binks doesn't want—"

"No, oh no!"

"Well, then, why do you try to? As a matter of fact, however much he knows, he can't know about this, can he? Has he ever had any experience?"

"N-no."

"Very well. Now be a good, sensible girl and don't cry — it isn't good for you. The kid is probably jealous instinctively — who wouldn't be? He's old enough for that, at any rate."

"He's quite old now, isn't he, Tommy? You never used to think that we should have a son nearly five years old, did you?"

"Well," Mr. Wilbour returned judicially, "I never thought we *wouldn't*, you know. I never planned to have him cut off in his prime."

"Do you remember how he used to laugh when he was little? I thought he never would talk—never! I was so frightened, but I didn't tell you so. I thought maybe he was dumb!"

"For heaven's sake!"

"Like the scarlet fever, you know—they often are."

"But Binks had never had the scarlet fever, darling."

"No, but I had, and I thought maybe—"

"Oh, I don't believe it ever happens that way," said her husband reassuringly.

"Well, you can't tell, Tom. I've been reading about much stranger things than that."

"Toots, have you been at that ghastly book again? You ought to be ashamed! If you don't look out, you'll have all those things, and a lot more, too. I wish I'd never got the thing. If you don't promise me you'll not open it again, I shall burn it this minute. And the leather will smell awful."

"But, Tommy, I ought to know—"

"Nonsense! Listen to me. Susan, I command you not to open that book. I shall"—Tom quaked inwardly, but preserved a brave front—"I shall be seriously displeased with you."

"Oh, please don't call me Susan, Tom! I—I won't look at it—truly I won't," she murmured submissively. "I'll have Binks sit on it instead of the dictionary; he won't use his high chair, you know."

"I wonder," Mr. Wilbour suggested, "if that's what makes him so argumentative and—and wordy, you know—sitting on the dictionary. Now I always used *The Pilgrim's Progress* for that purpose, and I feel I owe a great deal to the choice."

"I sat on bound volumes of *Godey's Ladies' Book*," Susy remarked, "perhaps that's why I never had any more sense."

"I shouldn't wonder at all," Tom agreed cordially. "I mean," as she stiffened slightly in his arms, "I mean, of course, how can you suggest anything so ridiculous!"

They both laughed, and rumpling his hair absent-mindedly, a thing which he detested on its own grounds, but loved because Susy did it, Mrs. Wilbour grew suddenly serious.

"Shall we always be as silly, Tommy dear, do you think?" she inquired.

"I hope so. Why?"

"Of course, at first . . . but maybe now I—we ought to begin to— You see, I'm getting to be quite old and middle-aged—"

Mr. Wilbour hooted in unrestrained mirth. "'Preserve us a'!' as the Scotch novels say," he managed finally. "Are you going into caps? You probably didn't hear old Mrs. Sears's remark to the effect that it seemed strange that such a tomboyish chit should be the mother of—"

"What! did she say that? Cross old thing! It was that Sunday she saw us in the automobile, and I had on that red tam and your overcoat. I couldn't freeze to death, could I? I look quite old enough in some things—that gray broadcloth! You know perfectly well I do!"

"Certainly, certainly, my dearest, you look positively antique—obsolete! Or else not at all,"

he added politely, "whichever it is you want to establish."

"And Binks said I was a good mother to him, he did, truly," she added seriously.

"What? He said—"

"Yes. That is, he said 'pretty good,' but he meant the same thing. It was when he said I was the best of any of them, you know."

"Oh! Did he present the testimonial entirely unsolicited, like the people that have been cured of things in the papers?"

"N-not exactly. I asked him," Susy confessed.

Mr. Wilbour kissed her irrelevantly.

"Do you know, Toots, that you are probably, from a perfectly unprejudiced stand-point, the sweetest thing in the world?" he observed.

"Do you really think so, Tommy?"

"Do I? I should say I did," her husband assured her, with so much conviction that she lay in a happy silence for a while, the last shadow of her little sadness gone.

"Do you remember when he held himself up by the davenport and walked?" she queried softly, at length. Tom stuffed some tobacco into his pipe, deftly, without disturbing her, and nodded.

"He was so sweet, then! And that bag! *Do* you remember the bag Aunt Emma made?"

Tom chuckled.

"I should think I did!"

"And the statues! Oh, Tommy, shall I ever forget those dreadful, dreadful things!"

He puffed forcibly. "It's more than I will," he announced shortly. Every one's sense of humor has its limits, and Tom's stopped just short of Aunt Emma's well-meant classicism.

"And do you remember how he began to talk all of a sudden, dear? That funny, mixed-up thing he said all in one breath?"

"Something about hot milk, wasn't it? What makes you remember so much, to-night?" he added, looking at her curiously.

"I don't know. I suppose he can't be a baby much longer, Tom. It will be strange when he goes to a real school and has marbles and roller-skates, won't it?"

Tom grunted comfortably.

"Do you suppose *he* will ever marry anybody, Tom? How absurd — he can't, can he? The idea!"

"Oh, I don't know," Tom suggested impartially. "He might. People do, sometimes."

"But not Binks, Tom!"

"Not if he waits to get as nice a girl as his father, certainly!"

"Oh, Tommy, you do say such sweet things!"

"Perhaps Binks will inherit it," said Mr. Wilbour complacently, "in that case he may stand some show!"

But if such an inheritance was Martin's, it had not yet developed, for he seemed gifted, at this crisis, with a fiendish capacity for saying the wrong thing. For the next few days he moved in an atmosphere of ill-concealed anxiety. Veiled hints of the future flew about his head. Remarks from Belle: "You'll sing a different tune, very soon, young man! . . . Just wait—we'll see who gets the petting, now! . . . You'll soon have to take care of yourself, I can tell you; better let me brush your hair while I have the time!" irritated him extremely.

"Why will I see? I won't sing a tune!" he cried resentfully.

Even Aunt Emma, his constant fortress in time of trouble, seemed to fail him now. She too was bitten with the idea of a sister, and discussed the advantages of this wholly imaginary situation till he fairly lost patience with her.

"But I'd rather have a goat, I tell you!" he cried in vexation.

"Oh, Martin! Don't say such things!"

"It isn't 'such things'! A goat is nicer. Why can't I have a goat instead, if I'd rather?"

It was hinted that both might be forthcoming; such generosity was unnecessary.

"But all I want's the goat. A goat's enough! You needn't buy 'em both," he explained.

"But perhaps the rest of us would like a sister better. I can't use a goat-cart, you know."

"Can you use a sister?" he retorted.

She sighed.

"Perhaps you will feel differently about it, later."

"Where 'll she sleep? There isn't any bed for her. She can't sleep with me."

"Oh, Martin!"

"Well, she can't. Do you know what I'd do if *I* heard the bell ring?"

"The bell ring?"

"When she came. I'd run ahead of Belle, and I'd say, 'Mrs. Wilbour'—with an amazing imitation of Belle's most frigid manner—'Mrs. Wilbour's lying down and she'll have to be excused this afternoon'!"

Aunt Emma recovered and seized the opportunity.

"In that case," she observed neatly, "I think it will be better to be sure you're not at home when she comes, for the rest of us want her to stay—we shouldn't like her turned away that way.

Perhaps you'd better make a little visit to Aunty Sis."

"No."

"Now don't be obstinate, Martin. You know you wanted to go and see Bunny and Sally."

"Well, I don't."

"Nonsense! you do. Just think, you could be in the Park in two minutes—it's no walk at all. And near the goats, too."

"He won't let me drive alone. He always walks along."

"Well, perhaps he will this time, if Bunny goes with you."

"Bunny has to go to school."

"But not all day. Now be a good boy, and perhaps Belle will let you help pack the suit-case."

On the whole, he was not sorry to go; he was tired of Belle's mysterious air, and she cut his walk short, of late, on the ground that she hated to be away from home so long. Bunny and Sally were very kind to him, and Bunny even stayed from school on the second afternoon and played in the Park till dusk. Sally put him to bed that night and hurried him home the next morning with an air of triumphant mystery that irritated him greatly.

"Why don't we stop and see the goats?" he complained, as proud in the competence of twelve

careful years, she piloted him across the street in a quiet place.

"Because your mother wants to see you," she replied primly.

"What for?"

"It's a secret."

"Oh, you think you know!" he cried. "You think you know the better than anybody!"

"PILOTED HIM ACROSS THE STREET IN A QUIET PLACE"

She smiled serenely and dragged him along to his door.

Aunt Emma met them, her face very red, her voice husky with excitement.

"Come in, come in, Martin darling," she said eagerly. "Come and see what we've got upstairs! What do you think?"

Suddenly a light broke upon him.

"Oh!" he cried, "it's that sister! She's come!"

"Guess again!" said his father, who, to his amazement, appeared at that hour without his hat and coat, beaming down on him. "Guess again, old man! It's not a sister!"

His face brightened.

"It's a goat! Is it a goat?" he shouted. "Is it in my room?"

"I am afraid," answered Mr. Wilbour gravely, "that you are doomed to disappointment. It is not a goat. But bear up. It is a little brother, Binks. What do you think of that?"

He stared stupidly at them.

"A little brother?" he repeated.

"Yes. You didn't seem to like the idea of a sister, so we tried to please you, you see. I hope we have succeeded?" he added solicitously.

But Martin still stared silently. "Don't you see, darling," Aunt Emma began, "it's not a girl at all. It's another little boy—another one!"

He looked piercingly into her eyes. Incredulous horror grew in his face.

"Another? Like me? *Like me?*" he cried wildly.

"Just so. Like you," said his father. He wheeled about and faced them all in succession; Belle had just joined the group.

"Like me?" he repeated, and then with a hardening of his jaw and a settled frown between his eyes, "Where is my hammer?" he demanded furiously, "my wooden hammer!"

The women gasped in terrified amazement; his father chuckled regrettably.

"Come on," he said soothingly, "you'll feel better, later. Come and see mother."

Up the stairs went Martin Brinkerhoff Wilbour, stamping violently, seething with just resentment.

By his mother's bed he paused, scowling at a strange woman in the room who smiled patronizingly at him.

"Kiss mother, sweetheart," said a voice. Something in the tone of it tugged at his heart: he could not but love her. Magnanimously he stooped and kissed her.

"My own boy," she whispered, "see!" and she stirred her arm slightly.

"WHAT DO YOU THINK?"

He looked. What pitiful thing did he behold! A comprehending tolerance swept over him. This was not what he had feared.

"Oh!" he murmured. "Oh, *that!*"

"That is the baby, yes," she said, so sweetly, so winningly. "Will you love him?"

He glanced around at them, to be sure of their respectful attention before he began his noble and noteworthy reply. But what? In all that room there was no eye for him! Belle was kneeling adoringly by the bed, Aunt Emma was bending over the foot of it, his father sat on the side of it, with one arm around its occupant. Even the strange woman regarded not Martin, the proper centre of interest. To all intents and purposes he was not there! It struck him with terrible force that all was changed; they loved that other one now.

His chin quivered, his haughty mien dissolved, he gulped, and a large, wet tear trickled down his cheek.

Suddenly Aunt Emma looked up from the bed and saw him, a pathetic figure among them. Remorse surged over her, and she ran around to him and caught him in her arms.

"Martin! Oh, Martin!" she exclaimed, with a sort of sob. "Don't you mind, darling, don't

you mind! You are Aunt Emma's own baby—you shall always be! Always! You shall be *my* baby!"

He struggled from her arms and dashed the tears from his eyes. His hands slipped into the pockets of his ridiculous trousers unconsciously.

"'I'M NOT ANYBODY'S BABY'"

"Pooh!" he said, catching his father's eye defiantly, "pooh! I'm not, either. I'm not anybody's baby. *That's* a baby. I'm a boy!"

"That's right, old man," cried Tom, reaching out to him, "so you are. Shake hands!"

The reign of Martin the First was ended.

THE END